BLACK AND WHITE DO NOT MAKE GREY: NARRATIVES OF WOMEN'S

FRIENDSHIP ACROSS A RACIAL DIVIDE IN METRO DETROIT

by

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Abstract

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Black and White Do Not Make Grey: Narratives of Women's Friendship Across a Racial Divide

in Metro Detroit

Doctoral dissertation directed by Professor Robert Craig

Interracial friendship between African Americans and whites in metro Detroit requires bridge-building across a socially constructed divide. This ethnographically-inflected, interview-based case study of the narratives of three friendships between black and white women in metro Detroit analyzes the communicative co-construction of their relationships. Friendship narratives, which arose in three-person interaction (between the friendship dyad and researcher), serve as the primary data. Applications of the methods of analysis of William Labov et al. (1972, 1981; Labov & Fanshel, 1977; Labov & Waletzky, 1967) provide the primary analytic lenses. Conclusions demonstrate how interpersonal relationships may be performed in the setting of a specific social landscape. The narratives of the friends in this case study illustrate co-constructed practices of communication, such as perspective-taking, metadiscourse, successful conflict management, and humor–practices which may be conducive to the maintenance of friendship across socially constructed difference. The narratives also illustrate how participants and researcher may interactively co-construct identities (including racial identity and a friends-as-family identity) that seem to be especially salient to the success of interracial relationships. Finally, conclusions identify ways in which the narratives of the friends both conform to and resist the metanarrative of metro Detroit, which this study demonstrates is a story deeply embedded with racial hostility and a will to fight. In sum, this narrative inquiry explores the range of communication practices and rhetorical strategies that dyads of African American and European American friends may employ as they exert their agency to resist and transcend the dominant themes of the metanarrative of metro Detroit.

Dedicated with love

to Mark.

Together we lived the reality

that one relationship can change everything.

Most of all, to *Jesu, mein Freund*.

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Friend

Walking with you
shuts off shivering.
Here we are.
Here we are.

I am with you to share and to bear and to care.

This is warm.
I want you happy, I want you warm.

Your Friend for our forever is what I am.
Your Friend in thorough thankfulness.

It is the evening of our love.
Evening is hale and whole.
Evening shall not go out.
Evening is comforting flame.
Evening is comforting flame.

–Gwendolyn Brooks (2004, p. 58), *Reprinted by Consent of Brooks Permissions*

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I. INTRODUCTION

I should have chosen another
city with a less thin veneer
and nature
if I wanted to lapse
into the easy sleep
of convenience,
of clean air.
            –From "Harder Options" by Detroit poet Vievee Francis (2005, p. 7)

Though it seemed like the best option at the time, our family's relocation in 2005 to the

border of Detroit and Grosse Pointe Park was hard. Because of the focus and genre of the

dissertation, I will confine myself to the ways that the relocation felt hard in terms of the

research that I am representing here. I had left good friends, a sunny climate, and an academic

location that I loved. I was entering the most independent (and potentially lonely) stage of a

doctoral program–the dissertation–without a personal or professional support network in our new

community.

And then there was the borderland experience. I will say more about this later (in the

Detroit chapter), but the tension between Detroit and Grosse Pointe was palpable from our very

first visit. I met the people on the search committee for my husband's new job. One of them

lived in Detroit. At least two of the Grosse Pointe residents on the committee said to me at

different points: "That's (or this is) Sue.[1] She lives in a *good* (or *nice*) part of Detroit." *What*

are they talking about? I wondered. *Why are they marking one another and their social*

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[1]All names involved in recalled experiences have been changed.

landscape this way? Is Sue identified as a kind of honorary Grosse Pointe resident?

The tension over geography and identity only increased when we moved. My suspicion was confirmed that black/white racial segregation was often stark in this social location. I found out that the only African American adult in our new church community, which, like our home, was on the Grosse Pointe Park border, was an employee but not a member. The only African Americans on our block (who lived directly across the street from us) were also the only renters, and their presence was the source of worried neighborhood gossip (also the source of a lawsuit, I heard, since the neighbors were contesting the owner's right to divide the home into two rental units). Just sitting on the porch of our beautiful home was a stressful experience. I didn't even need to start crossing borders for tensions of race and identity to find me.

Meanwhile, I keenly felt a lack of friends. For me at that point, a friend would be some one who accepted me as a relocated person, take at least a bit of interest in where I had come from, and also have some sense of what my tensions were in this social landscape. Even in the moment, I realized that this was a tall order. People who had somehow resolved the tensions did not want to be reminded of them. People who had never lived anywhere else or had relocated long ago had no way to identify with my migration. I had no work place contacts. I had no significant contacts on the other side of the border in Detroit–except for the church employee, who was exceedingly kind.

Months dripped into years like a long rain. The stress over issues of friendship and identity in this social location grew more intense. In 2007 I wrote this narrative in my field notes:

7/27

All this week I have been battling with myself and with things I'd rather not do. What I've wanted to avoid is my manilla file and the many books I've gathered about Detroit and segregation. Reading and rereading and then taking notes on this topic are distressing tasks. I take segregation very personally these days. I don't think that segregation is the best way for me or any one else to live; yet, even mundane daily experiences erode my resolve.

For example, on Monday this week I decided to take Curtis [my son] to the Belle Isle playscape on our way home from picking up Tiger tickets at Comerica Park in downtown Detroit. (Already at Comerica, the ticket agent was black and I was white; we didn't get along very well, but that's another story . . . .)

Belle Isle is an island city park of Detroit. In September, it will hold a Grand Prix race thanks to Detroit benefactor Roger Penske. This week they are constructing race facilities and testing the track. Belle Isle is a huge park, a conglomeration of fairly well kept facilities like the arboretum, the Detroit River beach, the playscape, a golf course, and a nature center. It's home to the Detroit Yacht Club, which I hear is an elegant place. Other facilities are in crumbling ruins, for example, most of the island playgrounds, a small zoo, and an aquarium. The latter two are both closed, dying by neglect like much of Detroit.

The playscape is large and has lots of attractions for kids: slides with rollers, tunnels, and spirals; bridges; and a giant maze of colorful jungle gym equipment. The ground is covered by the soft, springy, bright-colored rubbery stuff that's much more in favor these days than old-fashioned wood chips or sand.

One Sunday our family and another family from church went to Belle Isle for a picnic. The island was swarming with happy weekenders–all black except us, I think–many camping out all day for family reunions. There was nary a picnic table to be found, so we laid out our blankets on the ground and had a good time. When the kids played on the playscape, it was all that four adults could do to keep some track of four white children who were jumbled into the crowd.

Anyway, on Monday–after what was predictably another busy weekend at Belle Isle–I wanted to treat Curtis for his patience at Comerica by offering him some play time. When we pulled into the playscape lot, he said,

"I don't see Bella and Olivia here" [the older kids from the picnic family].

"No, I left a message but their mom didn't call back. I don't think they can come to the playscape today."

"But I want to play with them."

"I know. But it just won't work out today. You can still have fun playing on your own."

"But there's only brown kids up there."

"Well, once we get up there, you'll probably see all different kinds of kids," I said without much conviction. "And besides, everybody's the same on the inside, so we should try not to think so much about skin color. Let's just get out and have fun."

We did get out then. When we reached the playscape, all the children I could see were African American, just as Curtis had predicted.

But what I was distressed to see was the trash. Detroit is infamous for its trash, and there it was: water bottles (I kicked one inadvertently since there were so many underfoot), wrappers, gum, food, plastic pieces, probably glass shards (though I didn't want to look too hard), and piles of rubbish that, again, I didn't want to inspect too closely–all littering the soft, brightly-colored play surface. At one point, I saw a large bubbly smear of candy or gum, glistening in the sunshine, at least two feet long in neon yellow.

It was yucky.

Curtis said, "Oh, there's so much trash!"

"Yes, it's just because they had a busy weekend here, and the clean-up workers haven't had time to clean up yet. Let's just try to ignore it and have fun."

We did try to have fun, I watching Curtis on the slides, both of us trying the connect four game on one of the jungle gyms and walking over to inspect the giant slide.

As usual on Belle Isle, some of the playground equipment wasn't in good repair. On one of the climbers, the cables on both sides had given way, leaving sharp, exposed wires at a child's leg level. Curtis pointed it out to me, but said he could climb anyway.

"I know you can. That's good," I replied.

All the while, the African American crowd swirled around us. I don't remember a single moment of interaction. We didn't know any one, and neither side bridged the divide.

And then, when Curtis and I were playing connect four, a big blob of slop hit my hat (the Detroit Tigers' cap that I'd just purchased at Comerica), my hair, and my hand. The slop was white, red, shiny, and lumpy. I looked behind me, fearing that some one had thrown or spit a dollop of candy or ice cream at me. I put my nose close to the repulsive slime. No smell.

I told Curtis that we needed to hurry to the bathroom because I'd been hit by some seagull poop (which I realized by now was the obvious explanation).

When we got to the bathroom, two senior citizens were in the foyer on folding chairs, I guessed in order to keep things in line in the bathroom area.

The sink area was fairly clean, but there was no soap, much to the chagrin of the person trying to wash her hands next to me.

I was chagrined, too, because not only was there no soap, there also were no paper towels. I had goo on my hand, in my hair, and on my hat, and there I was, trying to scrounge in the waste basket for fairly unused paper towels. I found a couple, and dabbed myself as best I could while Curtis watched.

Then we headed for the car and for our home in Grosse Pointe Park, where I could wash off the seagull poop. The residue of the experience as a whole is harder to rinse away.

I am so angry that Detroit can host a Grand Prix on Belle Isle, but not keep its playscape clean and safe for children.

And I try–granted, often in small ways–not to live in an isolated white world. But on this afternoon, I found myself thinking that the Grosse Pointe parks are smart for prohibiting the entry of non-residents. If the parks changed their policy, hordes of nonresidents–ah, most of them black, it's painful for this integrationist to think it–might overrun and trash the pristine parks just a couple miles away from Belle Isle. Who, then, would fix the cables or replace the paper towels in the Grosse Pointe parks? Surely not the white people fleeing to Oakland County.

Even now I wince at the distress of this experience and at the way I recounted it. Even now I have similar experiences. Just the other day, a neighbor down the street stopped me as I was walking toward the corner. This neighbor has never engaged me in conversation before, but he wanted to talk that day about the trash in his yard. He had recently stopped three kids walking toward Detroit, kids who had thrown trash on his yard. He detailed the trash–much as I did in the narrative above–and recounted the way that he had confronted the trash throwers. My neighbor stopped me to talk. He stopped the Detroiters to talk. The conversations were very different.

How people here deal with difference and how some of them have even formed friendships across socially and materially co-constructed borders became my dissertation topic.

(Sadly, an earlier topic idea–about how pastors' wives offer support to one another–was not doable for me in this social landscape. I did not find any existing networks of such support–especially not across the socially constructed border–and did not have the energy to start a new group and write a dissertation besides. However, that autoethnographic project would be promising for some one else.) The lack of friendship and the identity tension were my black and white that became grey. These stark absolutes combined to create a grey, murky, shadowy social world. I lived in that grey world as hopefully as I could. Every day that I wrote field notes, I paused at first to write an answer to this question: "What's good about where we live?" Some mornings I paused for a long time before I could think of something. Some days I probably did not write field notes simply because I knew that question would come first.

I also knew that friendship was a hopeful topic. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) encourage narrative inquirers to choose a metaphor for their work. I quickly knew what mine would be: Black and White Do Not Make Grey. Or $B + W \neq G$. The friends I would study, I thought, would have resisted color theory.

Women's friendship in interaction at a specific social location was also a logical topic for me. As a feminist, I am characteristically interested in the rhetorical and relational practices common to women. Historically, they have not received their share of attention. Friendship research was not a new area of interest, since at the time of our relocation I had just finished teaching Interpersonal Communication at the University of Colorado. Besides, an interpersonal relationship was small-scale. The racism and racial tension that I felt as omnipresent hauntings at my border location contributed, I knew, to the complex, gigantic social and economic problems that clouded the future of metro Detroit. But friendship was hopeful and small.

Furthermore, I was committed to studying relationships in interaction if possible because of the influence of one of my first mentors at the University of Colorado, Karen Tracy. In addition, because of the guidance I received and reading that I did with two other University of Colorado mentors, Bryan Taylor (Communication) and Carole McGranahan (Anthropology), I wanted to study friendship ethnographically, as situated in its social location.

Two texts were also especially influential at the time that I chose this research topic. Paul Clemens's (2005) *Made in Detroit: A South of 8-Mile Memoir*–one of many books that I read as I attempted to orient myself to my new social location and then prepared myself as a "human instrument" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) for research–spoke eloquently of the struggle to negotiate identity in a social location where white privilege is both affirmed and challenged on a daily basis. Second, Mary McCullough's (1998) *Black and White Women as Friends: Building Cross-race Friendships,* suggested by Robert Craig and Karen Tracy, is the book that details McCullough's dissertation research with black and white friendship dyads in Philadelphia. This thoughtful interview study of friendships in a specific social location inspired me to extend such work into an additional social location, metro Detroit.

Though I had few friends in our new location, I knew that previously I had been successful in friendship–whether across significant socially constructed divides (economic/educational/ethnic/religious/racial/gender/sexual orientation/age, and so on) or not–and studying friendship in metro Detroit might, at least for a time, be an acceptable and even hopeful substitution for actually having friends.

However, I did not want the dissertation to be "all about me," even though I was and still am more self-absorbed than not, and even though I saw the epistemological value in

autoethnographic research. I was committed to listening to the narratives of the friends I would

meet with the openness and intensity of the learner and novice researcher that I was. I wanted to

know *how they did it* in what I experienced as a hostile social location. I wanted to represent the

narratives of the friends in ways that would contribute to conversations in the field of

communication and beyond. I knew that the challenges to friendship in this social location

might partly be unique, but, on the other hand, they might be more common that not in American

society. The discursive ways that the friends meet these challenges–as evidenced by their

narratives–might be instructive, I thought, to others who wish to transcend socially constructed

divides wherever they are found.

The research question, then, that guided this study is as follows:

What do the friendship narratives of black and white women in metro Detroit illustrate

about the communicative construction of relationships that confront and span a

historically significant social divide?

In this project I have studied the role of communication in friendship as an interpersonal means

of bridging and confronting a cultural divide in a geographic location where racial differences

seem especially significant in everyday experience. I have analyzed how and why friends co-

construct their relationship stories and narratives in the context of a particular time, research

setting and listener. Although narrative researchers have much to say about how narrative

constructs individual identity, the work of narrative in co-constructing *relational* identity within

interactive contexts receives much less attention. The co-construction of relational identity

between black and white women friends in metro Detroit deserves consideration. I have

attempted, if nothing else, to affirm the efforts of women who are invested in these relationships.

The representation of this research narrative will proceed with a Review of Relevant Literature, including the topics of Narrative Inquiry, Friendship, and the Social Construction of Race. This chapter includes definitions that are pertinent to the research. Chapter III offers a view of Detroit as a social location, including its history of racial tension. By necessity and design, the perspective in this chapter is limited to the research interests of this study and to my own ethnographic perceptions. Chapter IV provides a Review of the Research Design and Methods of Analysis that are applied in Chapters V - VII, which offer an introduction to each friendship pair, illustrations of some of the friends' communicative practices, a featured narrative for each pair, and analysis of that narrative. Chapter VIII moves in the direction of rhetorical analysis, observing how attention to the deeper structure of the featured narratives and the creation of palimpsests (composite texts including Detroit metanarratives of racial history and a representation of the friends' voices) provide additional insights into how the friends' narratives may relate to the metanarrative of metro Detroit. In most ways, the friends "talk back" to the metanarratives; in at least one significant sense, they conform instead. Finally, the Conclusion will provide summary, a discussion of the contributions of this study, a look to the future, and a final researcher reflection.

II. REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

The aim of the literature review is "to hold the tension between personal and theoretical knowledge, to straddle the line between a necessary openness to phenomena that are as-yet-unknown and theoretical sophistication that, loosely held but firmly integrated intellectually, stands in the wings to illuminate the interviewees' words, readings of the texts, and understandings of the narrative that will emerge." (Josselson & Lieblich, 2003, p. 263)

Narrative Inquiry

Theoretical Overview

We are born into a world of stories. Our births mark the beginning of a distinctive story in which each of us assumes a leading part. Our deaths end our unique stories, which live on the minds and hearts of our survivors. Between birth and death, we rely on stories circulating through our culture to make sense of our everyday lives and guide our actions. Much of who we are and what we do originates in the tales passed down to us and the stories we take on as our own. (Bochner, Ellis, & Tillmann-Healy, 1997, p. 307)

Our "world of stories":   Many scholars–of literature, history, psychology, theology–to name only a sampling–have written about how humans make meaning, guide behavior, and construct identity through narrative. Specifically for this study, how do scholars theorize about the communicative work of narrative discourse?

As Riessman (2008) points out, a basic discursive function of narrative is the organization and communication of the narrator(s) memories. Rawlins (2009) claims that this function becomes especially significant in friendship, for when friends engage in narrative, they may find enjoyment in transporting themselves in time to other "places and possible versions of selves. Narrative provides ways to reminisce about personal, romantic, recreational, family, work, and political activities . . . accomplished in the past." Narrative dialogue about memories shared by friends, then, provides a sense of solidarity and an opportunity for "mutual cross-examination of issues we consider important" (p. 61).

Narrative transports memories and perceptions out of individual consciousness and into

the fray of "verbal action," where narrators "explain, entertain, inform, defend, complain, and confirm or challenge the status quo. Whatever the particular action, when someone tells a story, he or she shapes, constructs, and performs the self, experience, and reality" (Chase, 2005, p. 29). Many narrative researchers focus particularly on how narrative discourse constructs and performs the self. Stories do identity work. Mc Adams (2006) notes that his narrative work is "part of an emerging movement in the social sciences called the narrative study of lives." He says that

> [t]he central idea in this movement is that human lives are cultural texts that can be interpreted as stories. People create stories to make sense of their lives. These evolving stories–or narrative identities–provide our lives with some semblance of meaning, unity, and purpose. (p. 14)

Nair (2003), claiming that human beings spin stories as regularly and freely as spiders spin webs, says that the "differentiated layering of multiple narratives . . . produces in human beings the illusory feeling that they are intentional agents 'born with' distinct selves" (p. 7).

As the self is constructed by narrative, it is also protected by narrative. We carve niches for ourselves within communities as we sculpt our stories. Nair (2003) writes that narrative provides "a format for defining an individual's social territory, and thereby, that individual's unique identity within a community" (p. 18). Implicit or explicit in narrative inquiry is the idea that storytelling is a necessary discursive mode for human welfare. We need a sense of identity, of belonging, and narrative discourse provides those assurances. According to Pagnucci (2004), narrative honors who we are and where we have been. It helps us empathize with others when our stories intersect. It helps us find our way into the future.

Constructing narratives constructs self, and this process features human agency. Riessman (1993) writes,

> Nature and the world do not tell stories, individuals do . . . . Human agency and imagination determine what gets included and excluded in narrativization, how events are plotted, and what they are supposed to mean. Individuals construct past events and actions in personal narratives to claim identities and construct lives. (p. 2)

When humans tell stories to construct identity, agency involves selection and persuasion. According to Riessman (2008), we make claims about ourselves and what "'really' happened" using skills of rhetoric; such skills engage listeners, often entertaining them and sometimes misleading them (p. 9). We craft stories that both "convey and conceal actual memory and experience" (Greenspan, 2003, p. 110). And how do we make choices about what is revealed and concealed? We seem to use a protective filtering process, since "actual experiences may be too complex, too confusing, too provocative, too shameful, too private, or too common to convey without the help of a 'made story' of some kind" (Greenspan, p. 110).

Indeed, narrative discourse assists us in shaping identities that are able to integrate life events that we perceive to be especially important or confusing. Riessman (1993) writes that "[r]espondents narrativize particular experiences in their lives, often where there has been a breach between ideal and real, self and society" (p. 3), and Pagnucci (2004) says, "Stories connect what we know to what we're trying to understand" (p. 9). Again, what we are trying to understand can feel chaotic, but narrative discourse is well suited to the task of managing a jumble of emotion and experience. Pagnucci writes,

> One of the beauties of narratives is that they don't wrap things up in neat packages.

Narratives can address contradiction, confusion, and complexity without offering any

concrete answers, which is, upon consideration, exactly what real life does. We struggle

in life to deal with conflicting emotions, misguided agendas, and mistaken analyses.

Stories can capture the unsettled nature of living, the messiness of existence. (p. 52)

Although narrative allows for "messiness," it also provides humans a means for cleaning up the

mess–at least to an extent. As Nair (2003) explains, across many cultures, storytelling offers a

way to process ideas that challenge our individual and cultural values (in the conflict of a story)

but then resolve the conflict by story's end. In narrative discourse, we impose a bit of order

upon chaos, thus preserving an ongoing sense of self.

At the same time, individual agency is limited and shaped by culture. Our narratives

claim identities only within the context of larger cultural scripts. Nair (2003) writes at length

about how our narratives of self are actually reaffirmations of the general maxims of culture.

These generalizations, she says, "like metaphors and proverbs, encapsulate the collective

wisdom and moral apprehensions of cultures" (p. 261). Likewise, Linde (2003) writes about

how the narratives constructed by the participants in her research embody the extant knowledge

systems and common sense of a culture–probably without the narrators even knowing that their

stories reify cultural values.

Furthermore, the identity work performed by narrative discourse is ongoing, progressive,

fluid. Human beings may fall under the spell of a sense of a static, univocal self, but narrative

discourse shapes a more complex self. Linde (1993) writes,

The properties of temporal discontinuity and structural and interpretive openness mean

that a life story necessarily changes constantly–by the addition of stories about new

events, by the loss of certain old stories, and by the reinterpretation of old stories to express new evaluations. We change our stories at least slightly for each new addressee; or change a given story for a given addressee as our relation to that addressee changes; we reshape stories as new events occur and as we acquire new values that change our understanding of past events; and we change our stories as our point of view, our ideology, or our overall understanding changes and reshapes our history. (p. 31)

Linde's (2003) point about how stories–and therefore identities–change for each new listener is an important one. Many narrative scholars emphasize the interactive nature of narrative discourse. We co-construct stories, thereby co-constructing selves. Pagnucci (2004) writes, "Narrative theory builds on a spirit of collaboration, taking as a central premise that we need to exchange stories with each other in order to make sense of our worlds" (p. 3). Audience is important, and narrators must "play" to their listeners in many ways. In order to engage them and receive their affirmation of sense-making and identity work, Nair (2003) explains how narrators need to establish continuity (the inner logic of the sequence of a story) and causality with listeners. Stories must make sense. Audiences must deem that they are worth listening to, and successful storytellers will craft their stories so that listeners are drawn to the same conclusions (about self and society) that they themselves hold. Whether listeners welcome or resist the telling of a story or the inferences preferred by a narrator, narrative discourse is a self-checking mechanism of identity work, since any narrative functions as a kind of practical theory about experience, a theory that can be refuted or affirmed through interaction with others. Nair explains that any narrative

competes with other narratives that could displace it because they offer "better" and more

"universal" explanations of a comparable range of phenomena. *Conversational* narrative

thus functions as "theory in the round," . . . with several opportunities for listeners to

present rival narrative accounts. (p. 30)

Narrative researchers may concentrate their studies more or less upon the "theory in the round"

aspect of narrative discourse, but interaction with listeners is always involved to some extent.

To summarize thus far, narrative discourse works to construct identity. This work

involves human agency as shaped by interaction with culture and audience within the interactive

moment. Narrative discourse constructs a fluid rather than static sense of self and helps human

beings cope with events that threaten their sense of order. It provides a self-checking theory of

experience.

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The Goals of Narrative Inquiry

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To continue this overview of narrative inquiry, I now turn to the topic of the

kind of work that narrative studies accomplish. Relatedly, I will consider narrative

epistemology: What is narrative knowing?

Narrative inquiry begins with the researcher's own narrative. Clandinin and Connelly

(2000) write, "One of the starting points for narrative inquiry is the researcher's own narrative of

experience, the researcher's autobiography. This task of narrating our own narratives of

experience is central to narrative inquiry" (p. 70). The narrative researcher, then–whether in

private or in public, in conversation or in print–tells narratives of her own past "that frame . . .

present standpoints, moving back and forth from the personal to the social, and situating it all in

place" (Clandinin & Connnelly, p. 70). Narrative inquiry, therefore, works first of all with the

researcher her/himself as primary research instrument. In the context of a research site, narrative

inquirers "make themselves as aware as possible of the many, layered narratives at work in their inquiry space. They imagine narrative intersections, and they anticipate possible narrative threads emerging" (Clandinin & Connelly, p. 70). As discussed above, every narrative at the site becomes a kind of practical theory, a lens on experience that the researcher tests within its interactive context.

What kind of knowledge can narrative lenses offer? Clandinin and Connelly (2000) caution that narrative inquiry is usually less about "a set of knowledge claims that might incrementally add to knowledge in the field," and more about "the creation of a new sense of meaning and significance with respect to the research topic." Narrative studies "are judged to be important" when they permit "the vicarious testing of life possibilities by readers of the research" (p. 42). At the same time, narrative inquiry is not incompatible with knowledge claims that are situated within narrative interaction. Riessman (2008) states that "[m]any investigators are now turning to narrative because the stories reveal truths about human experience" (p. 10). Following from Halliday (1973), Riessman (1993) identifies the discursive means that reveal such truths, what she calls "three analytically distinct but interdependent functions" of language: 1. ideational (the referential meaning), 2. interpersonal (how language connects us in relationships), and 3. textual (how structural elements, e.g., of sentences or stories, convey meaning). She concludes that "[n]arrative analysis provides methods for examining, and relating, meaning on all three levels" (p. 21); thus, narrative studies may make knowledge claims about meaning-making on any of these three levels.

However, such knowledge claims may not generalize to a larger group. Participant groups are typically small and temporally, culturally situated. As Brown and Gilligan (1992)

write of their participants, the point of narrative inquiry is "not that the girls we spoke with are representative of all girls or some ideal sample of girls, but rather that we learned from this group of girls and young women, and what we discovered seemed worthy of others' attention" (p. 23). However, though the breadth of narrative inquiry is not wide, it carries an emotional heft. Nair (2003) speaks of the ways in which historians sift through the sands of the past using statistics. If something seems to have affected a great number of people, then it deserves mention and commentary in historical chronicles. However, "in order to render emotion, you need the individual mode, which can only be literary and artistic" (p. 308).

Emotional knowledge can summon political action. Narrative inquiry, therefore, is often political as well as personal. Chase (2005) summarizes some of the ways in which narrative work may contribute to positive social change. In some cases, narrative becomes *testimonio*, an opportunity for previously silenced voices to be heard by an outside audience. In other cases, the researcher's voice comes to the fore, and her "authoritative voice" provides space for stories to be heard, exposing "the stranglehold of oppressive metanarratives" so that "possibilities for social change" (p. 668) arise. Chase continues,

> Audiences whose members identify with the narrator's story might be moved by the researcher's interpretation to understand their stories in new ways and to imagine how they could tell their stories differently. Audiences whose members occupy social locations different from the narrator's might be moved through empathetic listening to think and act in ways that benefit the narrator or what he or she advocates. (pp. 668-9; see also Madison, 1998, pp. 279-282)

According to Riessman (2008), significant resistance movements of the last century began in this

way, "as individuals sat together and told stories about small moments of discrimination." When

listeners identified with the narratives, "group belonging" led to collective action and advocacy

(p. 9).

Since narrative inquiry often does political work, its methods are well suited to feminist

research. Frankenberg (1993) writes,

> Since the consciousness-raising groups of the 1960s, feminists have transformed
>
> accounts of personal experience into politicized and theorized terrain. Through this
>
> process, the private, the daily, and the apparently trivial in women's activities came to be
>
> understood as shared rather than individual experiences, and as socially and politically
>
> constructed. The personal, in short, became political. (p. 7)

Rawlins (2009) notes that the sharing of personal narratives can be a feminist, invitational

discursive mode of communication (Foss & Griffin, 1995). Narrative research is thus well-

suited to feminist goals, since the researcher invites study participants to tell their narratives, and

the resulting exchange is inclusive and reciprocal in its co-construction. Listener/researcher and

narrator/participant create discursive space for what Rawlins describes as "simultaneously

connecting with others and performing individual points of view" (p. 60). Relatedly, in

narrative research, participants decide which stories to tell, how much detail they will offer about

their narratives, and how truthful they will be. They offer their own interpretation of events

along the way. Thus narrative studies provide the setting in which participants tip the usual

balance of power between researcher and researched (Graham, 1984, pp. 119-120). In short,

Graham claims that storytelling "provides a way of confronting the crucial issues of

misrepresentation and exploitation which bedevil those who work in the frontline of social

research" (p. 118).   Once narratives are shared in a research context, Graham states that the

methodology of narrative analysis does not violate participants' experiences by fragmenting

them; instead, it is a medium for conveying the complexity of one's life (p. 119). Although

cautioning that narrative studies always involve researcher representation rather than the hearing

of pristine oppressed voices, Riessman (1993) concurs that narrative inquiry privileges the

narrator's own sense-making and agency and is therefore well suited to studies that are

concerned with subjectivities, including feminist studies (p. 5).

Definition

> **In contemporary usage, narrative has come to mean anything beyond a few bullet points; when someone speaks or writes more than a few lines, the outcome is now called narrative by news anchors and even some qualitative researchers . . . . It is not appropriate to police language, but specificity has been lost with popularization. All talk and text is not narrative. (Riessman, 2008, p. 5)**

Having answered questions about the work of narrative discourse, the work of narrative

inquiry, and the breadth and limits of narrative epistemology, I conclude this overview of

narrative inquiry with a consideration of the definition of narrative that has guided this research.

Although a general working knowledge of narrative as a discursive unit underlies the

preceding discussion of narrative inquiry, specificity, as Riessman (2008) points out, is

important. As I map this terrain and set the discursive boundaries for this research, I will begin

by offering a small slice of the conceptualizations and descriptors with which scholars have

characterized narrative. Narrative is, after all, the primary data for this research. I have listened

for narrative in complex and overlapping ways, assuming that cultural narratives, relational

narratives, and the episodes that compose those relational narratives are all interrelated.

Furthermore, as Riessman (1993) points out, "[W]here one chooses to begin and end a narrative

can profoundly alter its shape and meaning" (p. 18).

McAdams (2006) uses a working definition of narrative that includes a beginning, middle and end; characters, which often play the roles of heroes and villains; and some kind of challenge to the central character (p. 76). Writing about the tension of this challenge between hero and villain, McAdams says, "Going back to Aristotle's *Poetics*, various theories of narrative suggest that story plots are often propelled by the protagonist's confrontation with an opponent–an enemy or force that stands in the way of the hero's goal striving" (p. 202). Thus the villain of a narrative need not be one or more human beings who oppose the central character(s), but possibly an opposing "force."

Foss (2004), following from Carroll (2001), describes four characteristics of narrative that partly overlap with those identified by McAdams (2006). She says that a narrative includes at least two events (whether active or stative), a sense of chronology, presumptions and/or statements of causality, and a "unified subject" (p. 334). Just as in McAdams's conceptualization, the events of a narrative do not happen to a hodgepodge of characters; one entity (often an individual or sometimes a collective) serves as the central focus experiencing the events of the narrative.

William Labov's classic conceptualization of narrative (Labov & Waletzky, 1967; Labov, 1972, 1981) defines the narrative discourse unit as a verbal sequence that reflects a sequence of events (1967, p. 20). Thus, temporal organization is key; indeed, a baseline narrative is defined as just one or two grammatical clauses that include a single "temporal juncture" (1967, p. 28)–in other words, an utterance with only one answer to the question, "and then?" However, Labov devotes most of his attention to narratives with "full narrative structure"

(1967, p. 32) or "normal form" (1967, p. 41). A full narrative is defined in terms of its syntax, or narrative grammar. This grammar includes the following structural elements:

Abstract: a "summary statement" that may be linked to preceding utterances and usually references the most reportable event of the narrative (1981, pp. 226, 228).

Orientation: acquaints listeners with the time, people, and settings that are significant to the narrative plot and most reportable event (1981, pp. 226, 230).

Complicating Action: events of the narrative, delivered in a sequence that reflects the original interaction. Labov analyzes these in grammatical clauses, which he calls "narrative clauses," that answer the question, "and then?" (1967, p. 32; 1981, p. 225).

Evaluation: "the point" of the story, according to the narrator. Narrators employ a variety of linguistic methods to communicate their perception of the importance of the narrative result and their attitude toward the participants and action of the narrative (1967, pp. 33, 35, 37).

Resolution: also called the "result" of the narrative, this is the "final action" in the narrative sequence, which is often fused with evaluation (1967, p. 33; 1981, p. 226).

Coda: a linguistic device often used by narrators to return "the verbal perspective to the present moment" (1967, p. 39).

In a prototypical narrative, Labov's conceptualization includes all of these narrative grammar elements in the order given.

Paul Ricoeur (1984), a hermeneutic philosopher whose scholarship is often cited within narrative inquiry, also emphasizes internal structure–which he calls "emplotment"–in his conceptualization. For Ricoeur, narrative

must be more than just an enumeration of events in serial order; it must organize them

into an intelligible whole, of a sort such that we can always ask what is the "thought" of this story. In short, emplotment is the operation that draws a configuration out of a simple succession. (p. 65)

The artistry of organizing events into narration that conveys a "thought" is tantalizingly complex, as narrators both adhere to and deviate from the story paradigms within their cultures (p. 208).

While Nair (2003) sees value in attention to narrative grammar, she calls for emphasis on the intersubjectivity of spoken narrative–the way that listeners, not just narrators, may contribute some of the elements of Labov's schema and certainly shape all of them. Her definition of narrative stresses the cultural uptake of a story–the "moral of the story" as it were. She describes a narrative and its moral using the analogy of the Indian rope trick: A magician cuts up a young boy (or an apple or a snake) and tosses the pieces into the air. Then the magician climbs a rope, puts the pieces back together, and descends the rope with the reconstructed boy. Nair writes that audiences enjoy this trick because of the element of the fantastic, but also because of the element of the ordinary: The rope trick

reassures us, structurally reassures us, that things come right back in the end to where they were in the beginning. The narrative movement is generally from terra firma to terra incognita and back. The linearity and temporality of prototypical narrative, its firm closures, its very constructedness, seems to possess huge psychological advantages. As in the Indian rope trick, the end of narrative is often recovery. All the freely floating parts of a narrative–its snaky tail, its envenomed irony, its spine of content–have to be recombined perfectly in the air, out of sight, and brought down to earth again. That is

often the prime satisfaction of narrative. It is what audiences in many cultures, ancient

and contemporary, expect of a "good" story. (p. 13)

For Nair, the resolution that concludes the narrative–the reconstructed boy–typically involves

some kind of reaffirmation of a cultural value.

My intention in this research is to synthesize elements of all of these conceptualizations

of narrative, but first, a word about "story" versus "narrative." In my study of friendship in

metro Detroit, the friends have provided a chronology of their entire friendship in the "Our

Friendship Story" phase of the research. This chronology correlates with the entire "life story"

told by individual participants within the research of Linde (1993) and others. Thus the term that

I will use for the series of events that compose the entire length of the friendship will be the

"friendship story," or simply, "story." I am interested in the friendship story in and of itself, but

for the most part in this research, it serves as the context for the primary data, which are specific

narratives. Those narratives are the episodes, anecdotes, or relatively short incidents that the

friends related when I asked them to elaborate upon the "key scenes" that they identified within

the chapters of the friendship story.

I listened for key scenes from the friendship story that satisfied a set of criteria that

serves as the working definition of narrative in this research. Synthesizing a number of

descriptors from the definitions above, a narrative in this case study is a discourse unit

1. of events occurring in a sequence in time,

2. including two or more interactants,

3. inferences (or explicit statements) regarding causality,

4. and some kind of tension, challenge or conflict (internal or external; perceived to be

anywhere on the spectrum from wholly positive to entirely negative)

    5. that is resolved (or possibly left unresolved) by the end of the narrative,

    6. leaving both speaker(s) and listener(s) with an affirmation (or disaffirmation) of one

or more cultural and/or relational values.

I determined that a narrative began when any speaker requested it (thus my interview question

was considered part of the narrative discourse if it initiated the narrative) or made an offer to tell

it. A narrative ended when any speaker or listener completed or commented upon the

sequence of events.[2] I assumed, with the many scholars who insist that narrative is co-

constructed discourse, that the roles of narrator and listener are fluid and at least partly

interchangeable. I also assumed, according to Linde's (1993) observation, that narrative might

feel more recursive than chronological, "interrupted by teller and listener alike" (p. 26).

       What all of the definitions of narrative have in common, including my own, is the

significant quality of transference. As Nair (2003) points out, narratives can be extracted from

their original context and then retold in countless new contexts. Stories travel. And they travel

not only in time and space, but across cultural lines. Nair says that though the "detachable" and

"iterable" qualities of narratives do not always receive mention by scholars, in her mind they are

especially significant, rendering stories as a discourse form "beautifully adapted to time-transfer,

to taking away, to having and holding in some kind of formal permanence" (p. 5), even when

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[2]This aspect of my definition gave an intriguingly complex shape to the narrative data,

since participants often co-constructed the same narratives during both of the three-person
interviews.

speakers and listeners do not share the same set of cultural understandings.

Friendship

Definition

Any study of friendship is apt to be troubled by the very notion of friendship itself. As Maines (1990) writes, friendship "is a catch-all term which is conventionally understood and recognized as having no fixed relational referent outside of the situation itself" (p. 172). Co-workers, neighbors, high school buddies who haven't seen each other for 20 years, even people who see each other weekly in a grocery clerk/customer relationship may call themselves friends. Thus clarity about the kind of friendships embraced by this study is important.

For the purposes of this study, I have begun with Monsour's (2006) working definition of friendship, which he claims reflects a wide spectrum of both lay and scholarly understandings. Friendship, writes Monsour, is "a reciprocal, nonfamilial, nonromantic, voluntary relationship characterized by mutual trust, support, and affection" (p. 58). The intimacy involved in friendship, according to Monsour, is developed through shared confidences and activities (pp. 62-63). Implicit in these understandings, I believe, is a quality of friendship identified already in ancient classical times: equality (Aristotle, 1980, pp. 200-201). Friends view themselves as equal partners who either have approximately equal status in their society or who somehow transcend the inequalities endemic to the society in which they live. In addition, the reciprocity of friendship means that the friends perceive that the work of building and maintaining the

relationship is shared in a roughly equal distribution. Thus the complete working definition that I have used for this research:

Friendship is an egalitarian, reciprocal, nonfamilial, nonromantic, voluntary relationship of mutual trust, support, and affection (Monsour). *The relationship is characterized by enjoyment, openness, and respect* (LeCroy, 1988).

Relational partners in friendship participate in the co-construction of both their individual identities (Bell & Coleman, pp. 1, 12) and in their relational identity–what Goffman (1967) calls coming to "share a face" (p. 42).

Before proceeding, I offer a final word about friendship as a voluntary, non-familial relationship: These qualities contribute to the fragility of any friendship and to the relative uniqueness of close friendship. Rubin (1985), who has interviewed hundreds of women and men about their friendships, notes how

> Friendship in our society is strictly a private affair. There are no social rituals, no public ceremonies to honor or celebrate friendships of any kind, from the closest to the most distant–not even a linguistic form that distinguishes the formal, impersonal relationship from the informal and personal one. (p. 4)

Because friendship involves no birth certificates, weddings, or divorces, as friends we do not feel bound for life or even for the long-term as we often do with siblings, parents, or spouses. The voluntariness of friendship is its freedom, but also its fragility. Rubin writes,

> It's this very quality of friendship that is at once so powerfully seductive and so anxiety-provoking, indeed that is both its strength and its weakness. To be able to choose is to be

free; to be chosen is to feel loved and admired. But . . . freedom exacts its price in our

sense of certainty and security. For what is given freely can be taken away with impunity

as well. If we can be chosen, we can also be "*un*chosen." (p. 23; italics in the original)

Furthermore, people of different races often do not chose each other as friends in the first

place. This is very topic I will consider next: how cross-race friendships are unique. Then I

will review how this relatively rare kind of relationship has been studied in scholarly literature.

Interracial Friendship

"Around eighth grade I had a good friend, Julie, who was in orchestra with me. We both played the violin. I'd asked her to come over to my house a couple of times, and she couldn't. My mom . . . said, 'Julie's mother's not going to let her come over here, and it's because we're black. If you can deal with being friends in school, that's fine, but you're not going to be friends with her outside of school.' As my sister and I got older, that kind of conversation was common."   –Bernette Ford (qutd. in Funderburg, 1994, p. 152).

"White girls–they so *phony*."
We did . . . this mimic thing with bouncy speech and a mock flip of the hair. I'm not a good clown, but I would laugh. "White girls–they so *phony*." That's what we said.
"But, Kerry, here's the thing:
"After all these years, I have to say it. *Thank you*.
"Thank you, Kerry Monroe.
"This thing you did was a full thing. A God thing, maybe.
"Because you weren't in my face with that fake, nice front–being-kind-to-a-colored girl business. You were so matter-of-fact with that brightness you had."
So I soaked it up.   –Patricia Raybon in *My First White Friend* (1996, pp. 96-7)

Since racial residential segregation is common in the United States (Peterson, 2007) and

particularly prominent in metro Detroit (as I will describe in Chapter III), black and white people

often do not cross paths in their neighborhoods. Sometimes entire black and white social worlds

may be largely separate. McAdams (2006) writes,

Blacks and Whites remain largely isolated from each other in their everyday lives. For

the most part, they live in separate neighborhoods, work in separate settings, eat at

separate restaurants, drink at separate bars, dance in separate clubs, learn at separate

schools, and worship in separate churches. (p. 175)

Even when black and white Americans do find some place to connect, they are unlikely to

become friends, since friends tend to choose each other based upon what Wood (1982) calls

"homogamy as an initial filtering factor in interaction" (p. 79); others concur, noting how friends

choose one another based on perceived similarities (e.g., Rawlins, 2009; Tatum, 1997; Tillmann-

Healy, 2003). Perceptions of racial difference in particular seem to discourage strongly any

tendency for individuals to initiate a friendship (Gaines & Ickes, 1997; Goldsmith, 2004; hooks,

1992; McCullough, 1998, p. 10; Raybon, 1996).

Furthermore, especially for individuals from historically oppressed groups, friends from

one's own group are important to identity construction. Rubin (1985) writes,

For all of us, by permitting us to see ourselves in the mirror of their affection, friends

help to anchor our self-image, to validate our identity. For those who live outside the

pale, this is doubly important–the central motivation for the tendency to band together in

friendships among themselves. Whether it is color, class, ethnic background or sexual

identity that is the basis for the prejudice directed toward them, friendships with others

like self became crucial in fortifying and maintaining self-esteem. (p. 54)

A testimony from a 28 year-old black man whom Rubin interviewed is particularly poignant:

I get enough of the damn white world and their stinking racism every day. I'm glad to

come home where I don't have to hear anyone complain about "lazy spades" or watch

them swallow the word "nigger" when they notice me, and crap like that. What do you

think it makes *me* feel like? So you aks me if I have white friends? Well, let me tell you,

when I want to feel okay, I stick with my own." (qutd. in Rubin, p. 55)

What Rawlins (2009) calls "the disparaging gaze of white persons" (p. 149) may leave potential

black friends feeling shamed, trusting only other African Americans as friends.

In short, the bitter legacy of oppressive history constrains relationships in part by keeping

blacks and whites apart in everyday interaction (Houston, 2004, pp. 122-123). Rawlins (2009)

describes the relational consequences of this legacy: "A history of slavery, economic

exploitation, and servitude composes a caustic backdrop for cross-race relationships between

blacks and whites in the United States. Consequently, negotiating viable cross-race friendship

requires continually overcoming historical injustices" (p. 148).   As Gaines and Ickes (1997)

write,

The lasting strength of societal taboos in keeping many persons of African descent from

establishing relationships with persons of European descent should not be

underestimated–whatever the biological, psychological, and sociological origins of these

taboos might be. What is most amazing, perhaps, is that fact that any of us manage to

cross the color line and maintain such relationships (not to mention our sanity) in the

process. (pp. 219-220)

Thus, although reliable statistics are not available to my knowledge (statistics on interracial

dyads usually focus on marriage), close friendships–actually, any friendships at all–may be

relatively rare between black and white people in the United States.

When individuals do risk the crossing of this seemingly treacherous socially constructed divide, sometimes a conscious effort toward interracial collaboration may lead the way. This effort is reflected in the 20 years' experience of Another Level, a men's friendship group consisting of black and white men in greater Philadelphia (Peterson, 2007). In his case study of Another Level, Peterson details how men's friendships have been intentional in their crossing racial, geographic, and socioeconomic divides as the men of the group gather at one another's homes to eat and talk. In another instance of intentionality in cross-race relationships, Mab Segrest in *Memoir of a Race Traitor* (1994) chronicles her confrontation with a family legacy of white racism and her journey as an antiracist activist. Her experiences with African American friends in activist work was usually mutually supportive; still, she reflects that

> I learned also to cipher the distances in Black friends, when in the middle of a conversation I would feel the attention drift or shift, a sudden space between us. Sometimes their challenge would be direct and swift, though seldom sharp; other times I would look back and recognize a subtle contradiction or re-routed conversation that left me searching through my words to find the point where I had thrown the switch. There was a constant possibility of small betrayals that could invoke the specter of much larger crimes. (pp. 20-21)

Significantly for the purposes of this study, the perceived challenges from African American friends was swift, subtle, and carried by communication.

Though no researcher can fully prepare for every subtlety, scholars do offer guidance for research on this unique kind of friendship. Echoing the call of Wood (1982) to pursue study of

relational culture on the participants' own terms (rather than based on the categories and theories of the researcher), Gaines and Ickes (1997) emphasize the need for attention to the insider/outsider dimension of research into cross-race relationships of any kind. They claim that, too often, the outsider's (i.e., the researcher's) perspective has been privileged, with the relational interpretations of the friends receiving scant attention. They call for a reversal of this practice, with researchers attempting to identify the interpretations of identities and communicative practices of the relational partners themselves. This reversal includes greater publication space for the voices of the friends–the insiders to the relationship–rather than the monopoly of textual space often reserved for the researcher/outsider.   Attention to insider/outsider dynamics may also allow the researcher to locate tension within the relationship based on the cultural baggage that each partner brings to communication. Even though relational partners are insiders to the relationship, they have also been socialized into the wider culture; thus, even in a close relationship a partner may be disappointed that the other person does not meet the expectation of a social stereotype, for example (p. 217).

Furthermore, Gaines and Ickes (1997) note that, since negative stereotypes cloud the perceptions and affect the actions of many outsiders toward the members of an interracial relationship, an outsider (in this case, a researcher) may well ask, How does such a relationship ever form in the first place? And, once formed, how does it flourish over time? (p. 207) Gaines and Ickes insist that insiders themselves must be asked such questions, but studies on interracial pairs suggest such "relational glue" as the following:

1. The relationship may meet needs for novelty and self-expansion: "Through their interracial relationship, both partners can gain direct access to another culture or subculture–the one that shaped their partner's attitudes, values, habits, speech, dress, food preferences and esthetic sensibilities" (p. 210).

2. Despite physical and cultural differences, the individuals in the relationship may find that in terms of emotional and/or intellectual rapport, shared interests and opinions they are highly compatible (p. 211).

Thus, according to the observations by Gaines and Ickes, cross-race friends may find that experience of another culture through friendship and also rapport through elements of individual identity (as opposed to collective identity) may be strong enough incentives to co-construct an unconventional friendship.

While not specifically addressing interracial friendship, researchers such as Houston and Scott (2006) describe communicative challenges and strategies that black women may encounter/embrace in any cross-cultural or cross-race relationship. They illustrate how black women may communicatively assert positive identity representations when faced with negative stereotypes. For example, black women may employ linguistic code-switching, affirmative talk about themselves, evasion of stereotypical assumptions (Allen, 1998), and the embodiment of black cultural roles (e.g., the sister, the universal maternal nurturer; Hill, 2003) in order to negotiate intercultural relationships. Houston and Scott call for additional research into how black women may enact such strategies in relationships of varying intimacies and what the emotional toll of such labor might be within intercultural or interracial relationships.

In a chapter that narrates their decision to become business partners, friends and scholars Bohara (who is a European American woman) and McLaurin (who is an African American man) (2006) ponder the co-construction of their unique friendship. McLaurin says that reciprocity is difficult, since shared identity is difficult to locate (p. 217). He says that he appreciates the fact that Bohara does not claim empathy with his racial identity, allowing his African American identity to remain something that sets him apart. McLaurin is describing a helpful dialectic that Collier (1998) calls the maintenance of "a mutually satisfying *relational* identity while simultaneously maintaining *divergent cultural* identities" (p. 375; italics in original).

For her part, Bohara (2006) appreciates the way that she and McLaurin began as allies against prejudice in academe, and they continue this kind of partnership in their new business roles. Bohara writes,

> [T]hose who would tend to discount me because of my gender still needed to deal with Patrick; those who would discount Patrick because of his race still had to deal with me; and those who would try to discount us both found it harder to do so with two of us to account for. (p. 217)

Similarly, Tillmann-Healy (2003) says that cross-race friends can collaborate as allies in advocacy and consciousness-raising. When they do, "those who are 'just friends' can become *just* friends, interpersonal and political allies who seek personal growth, meaningful relationships, and social justice" (p. 731; italics in original).

Furthermore, within her cross-race friendship, Bohara (2006) is learning to co-construct a new way of relating to the racialized other. She says,

Through my relationship with Patrick I am learning to see people of color as people, not

as "them" but as individuals, and I am learning to recognize at the same time that a

significant piece of their unique, individual identity is embodied in their race. (p. 218)

Although their insights about cross-race friendship are significant, Bohara and McLaurin resist

the tendency to generalize them to other relationships, concluding only that "part of our success

was the ability to focus on our commonalities and not let the potential divisiveness in racial and

gender differences prevent us from seeing the other person" (p. 220).

Although Peterson's (2007) case study of black/white friendships in the Philadelphia area

involves men's friendships rather than women's, and a friendship network rather than dyads, his

attention to practices of communication and specifics of social geography are pertinent to this

study. The black and white men in the Philadelphia friendship group (called Another Level) are

socioeconomically diverse. As they began the group with six members 20 years ago (Another

Level has grown several-fold since then), they chose not to develop an organizational hierarchy;

instead, they reached consensus about topics that would *not* be discussed at their weekly dinner

gatherings. Their agreement for interaction is called their "expectations," which include no

demeaning talk or jokes about another individual or group, no sports talk, no "'hero' stories" that

serve as self-aggrandizement, and no use of the group for professional networking (Peterson, p.

74). With certain kinds of talk off-limits, the men instead choose to exchange episodes of their

life stories without the stereotypical gender/race narratives that feature "competition, dominance,

misogyny, and violence" (Peterson, p. 75). Furthermore, their "hospitality-based collaboration"

(Peterson, p. 77) is intentional in its setting: the homes of group members in both urban and

suburban locations. Thus both whites (who tend to live in the suburbs) and blacks (who tend to live in the city) willingly cross geographic borders for their weekly Friday dinners together. Furthermore, the friends diversify their activity to some extent, practicing and performing an annual concert which is hosted by an urban church to which some of the friends belong. The synthesis of an agreement about a discursive framework, the primary activity of "hanging out" at dinner in one another's homes, and the willingness to participate on each other's "home turf" has created friendships that are not first of all about racial healing as a central discursive topic, but are achieving that goal through the shared narratives of the friends.

Collier (1998), writing about interracial friendships as one form of intercultural relationship, says that "power is one of the most critical relational dimensions" of such relationships. The differing levels of power accorded by society may be noticed much more by the minority relational partner than the majority partner. She concludes that interracial friends "develop explicit ways of dealing with their unequal privilege" in society, "or perhaps they negotiate power and control in more implicit ways" (p. 374). Whether the friends address power explicitly or not, a stance of openness and appreciation for the identity of the other seems important to the success and satisfaction experienced in the relationship. Collier cites Collier and Bowker (1994), who studied intercultural friends and observed how discursive expressions of affirmation enhanced the relationship; these expressions included "requests to be taught about an aspect of the other person's culture, storytelling, historical accounts of experiences," and family conversation (Collier, 1998, p. 377).

Rawlins's (2009) book-length study of friendship includes a chapter on communication in cross-race friendship. He offers transcripts of two interviews including dyads of college-age black/white friends (one pair both women, the other, both men) with a peer interviewer.   The interview participants, whose friendships span socioeconomic as well as racial difference, narrate how they met and describe the benefits of their relationships. Commenting on the import of such relationships, Rawlins concludes that "some might say the positive stories presented in this chapter constitute small beginnings at creating social worlds where such narratives are commonplace"; however, he urges readers to recognize the "integrity, learning, shared pleasure and affirmation, and pride in the name of friendship against the odds" (p. 171) that are evident in the shared discourse and narrative co-construction. For Rawlins, the friendships represent micro-opportunities to enact a desired macro-level transformation. He writes, "Cross-race friendship provides a forgiving space to learn, practice, and hear ourselves addressing issues of deep personal and political concern that divide and alienate people" (p. 156).

Mary McCullough's (1998) cross-race friendship research served as one of the most significant inspirations for this dissertation case study. McCullough interviewed nine pairs of friends from a diversity of socioeconomic groups in order to "shed light on the richness and complexity of these African-American and White women's cross-race friendships" (p. 8). In her book, McCullough uses rich interview material to feature the friendship narratives of four of the friendship pairs. Her thematic analysis of the entire data set traces the friends' political commitments, discursive evidence of "White guilt and Black shame," and the "differences in communication style . . . that impact these cross-race friendships" (p. 8). McCullough's

thematic analysis emphasizes that cross-race friendships between women are qualitatively different from same-race friendships. Attending to how the friendship pairs in her study successfully negotiated these differences allows readers of McCullough's work to take her participants' discursive strategies as exemplars for strategies that they themselves might choose to enact.

The Social Construction of Race

To study race in the United States is to enter a world of paradox, irony, and danger. In this world, arbitrarily chosen human attributes shape politics and policy, love and hate, life and death. All the powers of the intellect–artistic, religious, scientific, political–are pressed into service to explain racial distinctions, and to suggest how they may be maintained, changed, or abolished. The intellectual climate is anything but benign where racial studies are concerned. The ordinary competitiveness and isolation of academic work only adds to the peril. (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. xi)

Definition

Race is a fiction we must never accept.
Race is a fact we must never forget.
Both those statements are true. (Jenson, 2005, p. 14)

Scholars have reached consensus that the human classification system called "race*"* is indeed a kind of fiction. Its basis does not reside in genetics, nation or even continent of origin (Alexander & Knowles, 2005; American Anthropological Association, 1998; Appiah & Gutmann, 1996; Jensen, 2005; Johnson, 2006; Omi & Winant, 1994; powell, 1999). Race is a daily fact of social experience, however, since race is a powerful social construction. For the purposes of this research, I will define race as

an unstable and "decentered" complex of social meanings constantly being transformed

by political struggle . . . . *[R]ace is a concept which signifies and symbolizes social*

conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies. Although the

concept of race invokes biologically based human characteristics (so-called "phenotypes"), selection of these particular human features for purposes of racial signification is always and necessarily a social and historical process. (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 55; italics in original)

Omi and Winant write that race is discursively constructed in a multiplicity of "racial projects"–both large and small scale–that serve as

interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial dynamics, and an effort to reorganize and redistribute resources along particular racial lines. Racial projects connect what race *means* in a particular discursive practice and the ways in which both social structures and everyday experiences are racially *organized*, based upon that meaning. (p. 56; italics in original)

An example of a large-scale racial project is the effort of educators in the 1970s to promote a color-blind perspective in recently desegregated schools (Revilla, Wells, & Holme, 2004). An example of a small-scale racial project is an interracial friendship, whether or not the friends intend it to be so.

In studying interracial friendship,[3] researchers need to avoid the common trap of oversimplifying race. Thinking of race in genetic terms has allowed the widespread racial project of stereotyping, but a social constructionist view of race can lead to the same place if we mistakenly assume that people of the same race construct racial identity in identical ways. With Alexander and Knowles (2005), we must recognize that race is not "relatively stable, uncontested and antagonistic," but a human feature that involves "'difference' in its complex, fractured and unfinished forms." We need to lay aside the "convenient black/white binary categorisations and oppositions of 'old' versions of racial difference" and view racial categories–even those that research participants may strongly embrace–as interrelated and "mutually constitutive" (pp. 2-3). Furthermore, we honor the complexity of various social constructions of race by paying attention to how race is locally situated. Hartigan (1999) writes that researchers should attend to "the local settings in which racial identities are actually articulated, reproduced, and contested, resisting the urge to draw abstract conclusions" (p. 4).

Race as a Significant Feature of this Study

"I have a problem with the phrase: cross-race. It is my belief that there is only one race, the human race. Man-kind is simply made up of various ethnic groups, but one race. All people are a variant of the shade of brown, some of a lighter hue and some of a darker hue, but all one race."
–"Denebah," an African-American respondent in the methods survey for this study

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[3]Readers will notice that I use the terms "interracial" and "cross-race" interchangeably when I speak of the friendships represented in this study. I realize that the latter, especially, might connote black/white racial identity in polarizing terms. I do not intend to refer to black/white as a binary when I use the term "cross-race." The use of both terms simply reflects their interchangeability in scholarly literature, and the term "cross-race" is intended to honor the relational choice that the friends in metro Detroit have made: They have chosen to transcend a socially constructed divide. Their friendship is a bridge, if you will, in Anzaldúa's (1990) metaphoric sense.

Denebah raises an important point. If race is a social construction rather than a genetic category–and a social construction that has been employed in oppression–then don't researchers who study race risk reification of that oppression? Will we ever reach the Promised Land of a post-racial society if scholars keep ruminating over race? Many in academic circles (e.g., Appiah & Gutmann, 1996; Carr, 1997; Guinier & Torres, 1992; McAdams, 2006; Omi & Winant, 1994; powell, 1999; Revilla, Wells, & Holme, 2004; Wander, Martin, & Nakayama, 1999) ask some version of these questions: Why continue to perpetuate notions of race? Why not espouse a color-blind view of human relations, thus redressing the racial wrongs of the past?

Although the color-blind view of race relations seems attractive, it denies social reality and is especially treacherous for a white researcher. McAdams (2006) writes that "many people of color" do not see that a "transracial future" or a state of racelessness would be an ideal. Instead,

> when a White person tells a Black person that he never even thinks of the latter as Black ("I just see you as a person"), the comment may be heard as deeply disrespectful. It suggests that Black is not even worth seeing, or that to see a person as Black is automatically demeaning. The implicit assumption behind the comment is that since Black could not possibly be beautiful, it is best to eliminate race as a characteristic. But many African Americans see race as a deep vessel of history and culture. To ignore race, then, may be tantamount to disregarding a heritage that is at the very heart of African American identity. (p. 207)

Houston (2004) joins McAdams in speaking of the danger of color-blindness on an interpersonal level. Dangers pervade culturally systemic levels as well. As powell (1999) points out, the fact that race is a social construction does not mean that race is an illusion that can be waved aside with a politically progressive wand. Social constructions are experienced in discursive, embodied, and material ways; they are inextricably interwoven; no one can choose to ignore one of them, hoping a matrix that has taken centuries of social construction will disappear (p. 142; see also Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 1).

Instead of ignoring race, the deconstruction of racial oppression requires attending to how and why race is discursively constructed on a daily basis. For example, when Revilla, Wells, and Holme (2004) interviewed high school graduates who participated in the color-blind racial project in desegregated schools of the 1970s, they found that, although many graduates insisted that race/racism wasn't an issue for them, a color-blind perspective seems to have been problematic. Not talking about race maintained white privilege as the norm, and many issues related to race were not discussed, leaving "many misunderstandings unresolved, and many feelings deeply hurt" (p. 291).   Silence on racial issues allowed white graduates to ignore their complicity in racial injustice and all graduates to ignore responsibility for helping to construct more healthy race relations. Furthermore, as Wander, Martin, and Nakayama (1999) point out, the insistence on color-blindness by white people can mask racism. For example, in Affirmative Action debates, color-blindness allows whites to use the rhetoric of "fairness" when their underlying concern is the continuance of opportunities for whites (pp. 21-22). Thus "white privilege functions without having to name anyone a racist" (p. 23).

Therefore, although I believe that Carr (1997) makes a strong case for the more political term "nationalism" (rather than race), and Appiah (1996) is rightly concerned about reifying the negative history of race (he prefers the term "racial identity," and he advocates downplaying racial identity in the interest of a more equitable social world), I will be using race as a social category in this study. People use the term in everyday discourse, identify with racial categories, and follow the social prescriptions of race in everyday interaction (Appiah, pp. 80-81; Hartigan, 1999, p. 281; Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 60). I do employ the category of race in a qualified sense, however, recognizing that incalculable harm has resulted from the ways that race has been understood and enacted. Furthermore, I acknowledge, with Appiah, that race is only one layer among the many possible layers of human identification.[4]

The Role of Race in Identity Construction

Before taking up a fuller consideration of how race serves as a layer of human identification, I will briefly consider the identity construction process in general. Although the scope of this project does not permit a complete discussion of identity construction, some attention to this key term seems reasonable. The participants in this study, after all, will both reflect and construct both individual and relational identities during the research process.

Jackson (1999) writes that identity "is that which confers a sense of self or personhood . . . . Identity is found within messages communicated in daily interaction. Every definition of self

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[4]Accordingly, although I respect the textual practice of those who have decided otherwise, in this text I will not capitalize black and white when they designate race, with the intent of not according race inordinate power among the many interwoven layers of human identity.

includes culture" (p. 9). This "sense of self" involves countless mundane interactions that all the while ultimately construct our values; it is a dance of agency and interaction within a cultural context. In terms of agency, West (1993) writes, "[I]dentity is fundamentally about desire and death. How you construct your identity is predicated on how you construct desire and how you conceive of death" (p. 163). Desire, for West, includes "desire for recognition," the "quest for visibility," a "sense of being acknowledged," and "a deep desire for association" (p. 163). Death, which severs ties of association, involves identity work because a person's conception of death includes what he or she would be willing to die for, or at least how a person wants his or her life to count toward certain ideals by the time of death. Identity work, then, is a significant human endeavor, all accomplished via intersubjective communicative processes within a cultural context.

Appiah (1996) makes a distinction within identity work that is helpful for the purposes of this study. He writes about two dimensions of identity, the personal and the collective. The personal identity includes "socially or morally important features of the person–intelligence, charm, wit, cupidity–that are not themselves the basis of forms of collective identity" (p. 93). Thus any one, regardless of collective identifications, may be personally identified as a "team player" or a loner; as funny, adventurous, or hard-working. Collective identity, on the other hand, ties our sense of self to a larger group on the basis of some kind of racial, ethnic, gender or other cultural category. Collective identities, writes Appiah, "provide what we might call scripts: narratives that people can use in shaping their life plans and in telling their life stories" (p. 97). These stories connect individuals and groups to narratives of the larger culture. Stuart

Hall (qutd. in hooks, 1992) says that "identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past" (p. 5).

In terms of collective identity, we may also return to the idea of racial projects as discussed by Omi and Winant (1994). Race is a collective identity that is produced through racial formation–a life-long series of interactive racial projects, in which

[e]verybody learns some combination, some version of the rules of racial classification, and of her own racial identity, often without obvious teaching or conscious inculation. Thus are we inserted in a comprehensively racialized social structure. Race becomes "common sense"–a way of comprehending, explaining, and acting in the world. A vast web of racial projects mediates between the discursive or representational means in which race is identified and signified on the one hand, and the institutional and organizational forms in which it is routinized and standardized on the other. (p. 60)

What, specifically, does this "vast web of racial projects" contribute toward black and white identities in the United States? I turn to this question next. Although I need to reiterate my commitment not to view racial categories in rigid terms, scholars do point to trends within racial identity construction that are helpful to consider.

Black and White Identity Construction

It is absolute proof of our continued racism that no white person in his or her right mind would yet volunteer to trade places, become black, in America today.
If you are white, be honest: Would you? (Harrington, 1992, p. 447).

The first fundamental feature of black and white collective identities is their interdependence. As Nakayama and Martin (1999) write, "As a social construction, whiteness gains its meaning from its encounters with nonwhiteness" (p. vii). powell (1999) elaborates:

Race being a social construction means that white and black have to be understood in relationship to each other. Social and political power, as well as the implications in social terms, must be identified. There is no black without white; there is no white without black. In this sense we are all multiracial. We are also fractured racially not because of blood, but because we are mutually and continuously defining and constituting our race by what we include and exclude of the racial other . . . . [B]lack is necessarily a part of white and white is necessarily a part of black in a fluid and destabilizing dance of consternation. (p. 149)

What seems to be the constant amidst the fluidity of this dance is the idea that the black/white racial divide presents a problem. "How does it feel to be a problem?" is the implicit question that DuBois (1903/1995) felt in his interactions with whites more than a century ago (p. 43). Du Bois used the metaphors of a line between these two racial constructions–a line which he called the problem of the last century (p. 78)–or of a veil hung between the races, one that obscures the light so completely and one "so thick" that black people "shall not even think of breaking through" (p. 122). Although the racial formation process is arguably quite different early in this century, the notion of a divide and the idea of the other race being a problem has not disappeared. Indeed, as McAdams (2006) writes, "As multicolored as America may be today,

the distinction between Black and White still summons forth our most troubling history and our most vexing cultural dilemmas" (p. 208).

The collective memory involved in black and white identity construction is strong and complex. It reverberates dissonance down the centuries and decades. hooks (1992) writes,

> Long before white supremacists ever reached the shores of what we now call the United States, they constructed images of blackness and black people to uphold and affirm their notions of racial superiority, their political imperialism, their will to dominate and enslave. (p. 2)

When white American colonists and later citizens chose their forms of collective life, they chose slavery. The original Constitution of the United States included the designation of a black slave as three-fifths of a person (Wander, Martin, & Nakayama, 1999, p. 17). McAdams (2006) says that the decision to incorporate slavery into national life still functions in the American narrative as its

> greatest "sin," to which is attached its greatest sense of collective guilt . . . . In American cultural history, slavery provides what is arguably the most powerful symbol of an unredeemed world: A nation that celebrates freedom as its most cherished goal once kept many of its people in chains. (p. 189)

Of course, the abolition of the American institution of slavery at the end of the Civil War did not solve the problem of oppression. Omi and Winant (1994) do not overstate their case when they claim that for most of U.S. history, America has been a "racial dictatorship" rather than a racial democracy. This racial dictatorship includes the years 1607 to 1865, with a brief experiment in

equality after the Civil War, which "terminated ignominiously in 1877" (p. 66). Thereafter followed nearly a century of significant racial segregation and denial of voting rights–with or without the official sanctions of Jim Crow laws. Since the civil rights movement of the 1950s and '60s, these authors claim that "[t]he transition from a racial dictatorship to a racial democracy has been a slow, painful, and contentious one; it remains far from complete" (p. 66).

Thus, children becoming adults in America, persons of any race seeking their identity–even if they have little acquaintance with historical details–will confront the construction of race as it has developed in a white supremacist society. Wander, Martin, and Nakayama (1999) ask and answer a troubling question:

How is the social and cultural influence of whiteness maintained long after governmental and military imperialism and colonialism have disappeared? Scholars argue that the domination that white elites enjoyed in the 19th and for most of the 20th century continues to reproduce itself. The dramatic difference in aggregate power, wealth, and influence established over the past three of four hundred years and rationalized through race theory over the past one-hundred fifty years has been well documented. (p. 20)

Steyn (1999), a white South African scholar, draws connections between the whites in her home country and those in America:

The discourses that constituted the identities of early settlers in both countries; their understanding of what they were doing on the continents where they settled; their expectations of what these missions entitled them to in relation to the continent, its resources, and its peoples; all these have been repeatedly recycled in the face of changing

world attitudes, changing circumstances within the countries, shifts in the consciousness

of "others." (p. 267)

In short, racism persists in the United States–in terms of prejudicial attitudes and practices as

well as in the complex of systemic barriers sometimes called institutional racism. Blacks and

whites in the process of racial identity construction cannot help but encounter it.

Even well-intentioned education efforts during the identity formation process can do

harm as well as good. As Tatum (1997) writes, during the one setting in which American

students are predictably introduced to issues of racial justice–lessons about slavery in history

classes–both black and white students can become averse to their own racial identity. For black

children, "Uncomfortable with the portrayal of their group as helpless victims–the rebellions and

resistance offered by the enslaved Africans are rarely discussed–they squirm uncomfortably as

they feel the eyes of White children looking to see their reaction to this subject" (p. 41). For

white children, after an unrelenting portrayal of the people of their race as oppressors (white

Abolitionists and white allies in the civil rights movement may also not be emphasized in

classrooms), they can begin to feel that everyone white is bad, a depiction that is likely to trigger

denial or fruitless guilt.

Tatum's (1997) observations lead to the next topic for consideration: how black and

white racial identity construction differ. Certainly black and white racial identities are

interdependent and complex; they include features that are unique to each.

Black Identity Construction

"I have no white American friends. I just don't care for them. I have always told my sons and my grandsons not to bring a woman in this house who does not look like me. That is a point of respect."
–Julia Beaton, reflecting decades of white hostility in Birmingham, AL (qutd. in Norris, 2010, p. 94)

"Being black in America is like being forced to wear ill-fitting shoes. Some people adjust to it. It's always uncomfortable on your feet, but you've got to wear it because it's the only shoe you've got. Some people can bear the uncomfort more than others. Some people can block it from their minds, some can't. When you see some acting docile and some acting militant, they have one thing in common: the shoe is uncomfortable."   –A black, middle-aged insurance agent (qutd. in Terkel, 1992, pp. 9-10)

Certainly Julia Beaton and this insurance agent do not speak for all blacks. Yet, anger and discomfort are recurring themes among scholars–many of whom speak from personal experience of growing up black–who write about the process of black identity construction. For example, Guinier (2002), who attempts to emphasize the positive side of black racial heritage to her young black son, still struggles with the negative messages he receives from American mainstream culture.

DuBois (1903/1995) locates the angst and the strength of black identity in a double-consciousness that arises from constantly viewing oneself through the gaze of white people:

[T]he Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in the American world,–a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness,–an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.   (p. 45)

DuBois's assessment of black identity struggle is not outdated in the post-civil rights era. Contemporary black writers talk about struggle, too. bell hooks (1992) points to the damage of the white gaze and white media management when she writes about negative representation of blacks. She says that negative representation

> rips and tears at the seams of our efforts to construct self . . . . Often it leaves us ravaged by repressed rage, feeling weary, dispirited, and sometimes just plain old brokenhearted. These are the gaps in our psyche that are the spaces where mindless complicity, self-destructive rage, hatred, and paralyzing fear enter. (p. 4)

In response to the characterizations presented by a white supremacist society, hooks claims that blacks seeking their identity may attempt to look and act more "white" and select certain white friendship circles. On the other hand, they may avoid majority-white social settings in order to steer clear of racist harassment that arises in subtle and not-so-subtle ways. In all or mostly white settings, "many black people fear they will be hurt if they let down their guard, that they will be the targets of racist assault since most white people have not unlearned racism" (p. 16). McAdams (2006), who with his team of researchers has conducted life history interviews of a wide spectrum of African Americans, says that blacks frequently demonstrate a sense of early and continuing danger. Their stories "speak eloquently of the need to be vigilant in a world that can never fully be trusted" (p. 200).

The legacy of harm and fear in our society can be traced in the most personal aspects of black identity construction. One of these is variation in skin tone. Tatum (1997) speaks eloquently and pointedly about this common struggle:

A particular form of internalized oppression, the skin-color prejudice found within Black communities, is toxic to children and adults. A by-product of the plantation hierarchy, which privileged the light-skinned children of enslaved African women and White slave owners, a post-slavery class system was created based on color. Historically the Black middle class has been a light-skinned group. But the racially mixed ancestry of many Black people can lead to a great deal of color variation among siblings and extended family members. The internalization of White-supremacist standards of beauty and the desire to maintain what little advantage can be gained in a racist system leads some families to reject darker-skinned members. Conversely, in some families, anger at White oppression and the pain of colorism can lead to resentment toward and rejection of lighter-skinned members. (p. 44)

Little wonder, then, that blacks may also experience what Smitherman (2006) calls a "linguistic push-pull" (p. 5) relationship with African American Language (AAL). Smitherman claims that children growing up in black homes and communities–regardless of social class–are likely to learn one of the diverse forms of AAL, a language "with Black flava–with Africanized semantic, grammatical, pronunciation, and rhetorical patterns" (p. 3). The "push-pull" with their mother tongue arises because blacks love AAL and its connection to black culture, yet they sense that the only way to "succeed" in a white world is to push against AAL and speak in the Language of Wider Communication (LWC) (pp. 5-6).

Yet another "push-pull" struggle is likely for blacks who are co-constructing racial identity, and this conflict centers upon racial integration versus segregation. The tension

between these two impulses arises on both the systemic and personal levels. Omi and Winant (1994) write that early civil rights leaders viewed racism as a problem of attitudes and practices, and therefore endorsed the "espousal of integration and its quest for a 'beloved community'" that would "overcome racial prejudice. In its litigation activities and agitation for civil rights legislation it sought to challenge discriminatory practices" (p. 69). With the rise of black nationalisms, however, awareness of institutional, systemic racism grew, and hope for successful integration into a "white man's world" grew dim. Various nationalisms–all involving some form of racial/cultural separation from white mainstream culture–took hold in black consciousness and racial formation (pp. 70, 102, 108). West (1993) laments segregationist impulses and movements, but says that they are a logical response to a pernicious, long-term practice of whites "othering" blacks in negative ways, pressuring them to homogenize themselves into white society (p. 3). No wonder, then, that Tatum (1997) and hooks (1992) speak of black reluctance to form interpersonal alliances with whites. This segregation-integration "push-pull" may be a significant conflict for blacks in their process of identity formation on both individual and relational levels.

White Identity Construction

[I]n a racially hierarchical society, white women have to repress, avoid, and conceal a great deal in order to maintain a stance of 'not noticing' color. (Frankenburg, 1993, p. 33)

"[W]hiteness, like other social identities, is productively understood as a communication phenomenon" (Nakayama & Martin, 1999, p. viii). Thus white racial identification typically

begins, as Smitherman (2006) points out, with the linguistic acquisition of the Language of

Wider Communication (LWC).

Whites seem likely to acquire a particular manifestation of LWC that is especially potent

in reifying white solidarity and privilege. Tatum (1997) cites how Sleeter (1994) has studied the

ways in which white people learn to speak in code, "using communication patterns with each

other that encourage a kind of White racial bonding. These communication patterns include

race-related asides in conversations, strategic eye contact, jokes, and other comments that assert

an 'us-them' boundary" (Tatum, p. 195).[5]

Moon's (1999) research traces the many discursive patterns that combine to co-construct

white identity and solidarity, particularly for white women. Moon's analysis of interviews with

white women demonstrate that they/we tend to employ the discursive strategy of silence upon

hearing racist remarks. Good (white) girls aren't supposed to call others to account on their

expressions of racism. This phenomenon is a specific instance of the inculturation that says

good girls shouldn't become "bitchy" when they disagree with any mainstream practice. Racist

expressions are especially difficult for white women to challenge, since by doing so they "risk

ostracism and/or excommunication from their communities; whereas if they remain silent, they

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[5]My experiences resonate with Sleeter's (1994) research. As an example, one day I was
shopping with a white female friend in an upscale shop owned by a white woman. A black
woman was also shopping there, and she admired many of the more expensive items and made a
large purchase. After she had left, my friend and I were the only customers in the shop. My
friend was making a much smaller purchase than the previous customer and asked if she could
write a check. "Sure," the proprietor agreed. "But I need to be careful these days. I hate to say
it," she said, lowering her voice and drawing closer to my friend and me in a conspiratorial
manner, "but it's usually the blacks I have to watch out for."

are able to avoid overt conflict by enacting white solidarity" (p. 184). The White women in Moon's research often justify their silent complicity by claiming that they "have nothing to gain by confronting racist behavior" (p. 185).

Besides silence, Moon (1999) traces other discursive strategies that fall under the heading of what she calls "Whitespeak" (p. 165). They include euphemisms (which remove agency and disembody subjects) and hyperpoliteness (which is white discursive attention to what has been called "political correctness," but without the underlying commitment to dismantle white privilege). Conspiring together, Moon claims, such discursive strategies allow whites to speak in a kind of code about race that both overlooks their own whiteness and at the same time assumes that whiteness is the norm. Discursive practices learned during the process of white inculturation embrace both worldviews. Such practices allow white people to reproduce an identity that simultaneously upholds white privilege while denying that it exists.

No wonder, then, that white people are not likely to think of their whiteness very often, if at all (Jackson, 1999; Jensen, 2005; Moon, 1999; Steyn, 1999). White identity is discursively constructed in subtle, often silent ways, and it benefits those of us who are white in ways we might rather deny. Yet, no honest appraisal of white identity construction would be complete without a closer look at white privilege. Marty (1999) writes,

> [W]hite children born in the United States inherit the moral predicament of living in a white supremacist society. Raised to experience their racially based advantages as fair and normal, white children receive little if any instruction regarding the predicament they face, let alone any guidance in how to resolve it. (p. 51)

Truly, this "predicament" must be stated bluntly: Americans still live in a white supremacist

society. We may not all feel ourselves to be oppressors or oppressed, but our legacy as we

muddle our way toward racial identity is

> a society whose founding is based in an ideology of the inherent superiority of white
>
> Europeans over non-whites, an ideology that was used to justify the crimes against
>
> indigenous people and Africans that created the nation. That ideology also has justified
>
> legal and extralegal exploitation of every non-white immigrant group, and is used to this
>
> day to rationalize the racialized disparities in the distribution of wealth and well-being in
>
> this society. It is a society in which white people occupy most of the top positions in
>
> powerful institutions, with similar privileges available in limited ways to non-white
>
> people who fit themselves into white society. (Jensen, 2005, pp. 3-4)

And part of the privilege accorded to whites in a white supremacist society is to do nothing about

the problem. Jensen writes that whites may "ignore the reality of a white-supremacist society

when it makes us uncomfortable, to rationalize why it's not really so bad, to deny one's own role

in it." Whites may remain "ignorant because that ignorance is protected" (p. 10).

When, for whatever reason, whites choose not to remain ignorant or in denial about white

privilege and white supremacy, a variety of emotions may come to the fore in their/our processes

of racial co-construction. Fear is one of them (Dubois, 1903/1995; Jensen, 2005). Jensen writes

that fear arises out of a realization that white advantages are not earned and that whites may be

exposed for their/our racism–by nonwhites in particular. Both Jensen and DuBois note that a

terrible fear lurks in the thought that whites could lose much of what they/we have if the tables were truly turned in favor of justice.

Another, related emotion that whites may feel as they/we confront white privilege is guilt. Steyn (1999), a South African scholar, and Jensen (2005) offer particularity and unflinching honesty regarding their/our guilt. Jensen writes:

> Somewhere down in our guts we understand that in an oppressive system such as white supremacy, the unearned privileges with which we live are based on the suffering of others. We know that we have things because others don't. We may not want to give voice to that feeling, but it is impossible to ignore completely. And it doesn't feel good, in part because to be fully human is to seek communion with others, not separation from them, and one cannot find that connection under conditions in which unjust power brings unearned privilege. To be fully human is to reject a system that conditions your pleasure on someone else's pain. (p. xx)

Guilt has its place, but Jensen warns whites not to wallow in it. They/we are not personally responsible for slavery in America and the regression of Reconstruction, and Jensen says that for such origins of contemporary oppression, guilt is not appropriate. Deep sadness, yes, but not guilt.

What white people *should* feel guilty about, according to Jensen (2005) is their/our current complicity in white supremacy and inactivity in eradicating it. Sadness and guilt, moreover, should give rise to productive anger. Jensen puts it this way:

> Here's what I think white people need emotionally: Less fear, less abstract guilt,

more anger.

Less fear of ourselves and more risk-taking. Less guilt about things we didn't do or can't change. More righteous anger. Not self-righteousness, but righteous anger rooted in a commitment to justice, the kind of anger that helps us shed our fears and let go of our unproductive guilt. The kind of anger that can help us find our place and our voice in social movements seeking justice. The kind of anger that comes from desperation when we realize how powerful an oppressive system is, how deep are the injuries it causes, how destructive it is to everyone's lives including the privileged. (p. 58)

Properly focused anger is important, then, and so is attentiveness to the particulars of any given relationship. Jensen (2005) urges white people to "understand that in every human interaction there is the potential for connection and transcendence" (p. 65). Thus he urges whites to nurture interracial relationships and practice humility. hooks (1992) adds that whites have good reason for humility, since their racial suffering (once they experience the sadness and guilt that may accompany a recognition of their complicity in white supremacy) amounts to very little when it sits beside the centuries of suffering experienced by oppressed people.

Nevertheless, hooks (1992) invites white people to become allies in antiracist struggle. West (1993) offers a similar invitation, urging whites to stop doing what DuBois (1903/1995) knew they/we were doing–considering blacks to be a problem–and working to stop being a problem them/ourselves.

Whites, in short, must work to dismantle white privilege, the very system that benefits those of us who are white (Jensen, 2005; Lee, 1999; Marty, 1999; Moon, 1999; Pascale, 2007). Pascale writes, "Resistance to racism and racial inequality must begin with practices that remove whiteness from the unmarked center of daily life" (p. 29). "Helping others help themselves"–a common strategy for well-intentioned whites–is not enough. Such a course of action, says Marty, never challenges the systemic racism involved, since it allows white people to exercise their choice of whether or not to help, how to help, and how much to help. The helping also confirms in their/our minds the notion that people of color need help. Thus white privilege is reified by the very efforts of white people with good intentions. A more truly helpful approach, writes Marty, is an honest reflexivity that chooses rhetorical strategies and actions that are more in keeping with dismantling white supremacy. Marty says that such reflexivity is best sought not in isolation, but

> achieved collectively among the races. A collectively achieved racial self-reflexivity offers white people a moral balance against our propensity to reenvision ourselves according to our antiracist ideals. Yet it is feasible only if we are willing to face ourselves as others know us. Such a willingness to know and be known can be cultivated only by caring about our interracial relationships more than we care for our antiracist self-image. It also requires us to be unwilling to maintain our racial privilege at the expense of our moral integrity. Were we to take these intersubjective steps to move from admission to accountability, we could contribute to creating the antiracist language that we now lack. (p. 66)

In terms of relationships, Steyn (1999) says that South Africans are learning to relate and work together based on the "Southern African concept of personhood, *Ubuntu* ('a person is a person because of people'). *Ubuntu*, she says, "is acquiring great importance in the discourses of reconstruction and reconciliation"; it "soothes frayed nerves, kindling hope for a society that may be based on inclusiveness and forgiveness; a society that will provide a corrective for the alienation of the past." Even beyond calm and hopefulness, Steyn sees signs that *Ubuntu* is transforming white notions of their own supremacy. She says with whites recognizing the native "wisdom in Africa," that South African society has begun a "profoundly humbling and yet exciting" era; the reality white South Africans "are indeed learning marks the advent of a dialogic relationship based on appreciation of difference" (p. 276).

In conclusion, yes, identity is discursively constructed in powerful ways that reify inequality for whites and blacks in this society. We could gain much, however, from *Ubuntu*, the practice of healthy, respectful reciprocity and interdependence.

DuBois (1903/1955) also advocates another hopeful practice. He writes, "To bring . . . hope to fruition, we are compelled daily to turn more and more to a conscientious study of the phenomena of race-contact,–to a study frank and fair, and not falsified and colored by our wishes and our fears" (p. 188). DuBois calls the South of his day "as fine a field for such study as the world affords" (p. 188). Metro Detroit, the topic of the next chapter, perhaps also may be a fine field in DuBois's sense, since race relations in this location are both fascinatingly complex and disturbingly oppressive.

III. METRO DETROIT AND RACE RELATIONS

Detroit

"James, a native Detroiter, commented wryly, 'I mean, when's the last time you heard a game show give away a fabulous trip to Detroit?'" (qutd. in Chafets, 1990, p. 72).

"Fundamentally, modern Detroit exists to build and sell motor cars, and once it quits doing that it will lose its chief reason for existence."
–Historian Arthur Pound (1940) (qutd. in Young and Wheeler, 1994, p. 233)

"My faith in Detroit is part of my faith as a whole. Through personal tragedy, I have experienced the Christian paradox that God is closest to those in deepest despair."
–Arthur Johnson, long-time President of the Detroit Chapter of the NAACP (2008, p. 182)

I could describe Detroit as a city experiencing a hopeful reinvention. Detroit politicians,

real estate developers and everyday Detroit boosters–of whom there are many–would want me to

do so. I am wary, however, of the possible "delusions of those cheerleaders who would deny the

severity of the city's wounds, whether self-inflicted or spinoffs from racism or the boom-and-

bust of capitalism" (Stryker, 2011, p. 2F). As a suburban resident, I could choose the optimism

of a compassionate outsider or the protection of avoidance. However, I have made the personal

and professional choice to engage with both sides of my border location. My sense of social

justice has often been transgressed in this engagement. As a white woman of privilege, my

sense of identity has undergone challenge, and white guilt colors my perspective on Detroit

history.

Nevertheless, the following narrative of Detroit does not represent my perspective alone.

I have attempted to represent as faithfully as possible a diverse range of voices arising from this

research site: voices of the past and present, voices in print and in person, voices from various

standpoints on the metro Detroit racial divide. Their experiences entering into mine have

compelled me to offer a portrayal of the Detroit social climate that is more bleak than hopeful. I resonate with English professor Jerry Herron (1993) of Detroit's Wayne State University, who writes,

> This is not to say that everything here [in Detroit] is falling apart, because it is not; or that there isn't redevelopment going on, because there is . . . . But the fact remains that nowhere else in this country has so much history, both human and material, been reduced to a dreadful and frightening inconsequence. (p. 208)

Herron's experience, my own, and that of many others points to Detroit as a city devastated by deindustrialization, suburbanization, and segregation.

Statistics do not tell the whole story, but they are a starting place. Within its city limits, Detroit has lost more than half of its population since 1950, when the population peaked at nearly two million. Back then, "Most workers could get a fairly decent job with less than a tenth-grade education. Families could buy houses, cars, and even boats to use on greater Detroit's 3,000 lakes and ponds and 300 miles of Great Lakes frontage" (Mast, 1994, p. 3). With the decline of the American auto industry and removal of plants to the suburbs, the houses, cars and boats were hard to come by. In 1965, Detroit accounted for 68% of all jobs in southeast Michigan; by 1990, it was just 18% (Mast, p. 4). Even with the current recession, jobs and people haven't left southeast Michigan entirely; in fact, 2010 census figures places the six-county metro Detroit area at over 4.1 million (United States Census Bureau). However, most of the wealth has fled, as Mast describes:

The spark that ignited the exodus was economic decline. But as the city grew

increasingly Blacker and poorer, old-fashioned racism exacerbated a white flight that had

started in the 1950s with the lure of the suburbs and construction of an elaborate freeway

system. Detroit's 1967 insurrection–the most sweeping and destructive one in all the

country . . . speeded up the exodus of Detroit's Black and white middle classes. People

continue to leave the city if they can; those remaining have fewer children and are poorer

and older. (p. 4)

Although the influx of hipsters into Midtown Detroit has drawn attention, and city and business

leaders are offering incentives for suburbanites to relocate in the city, the results of such efforts

are not tipping the scale yet. The abandonment of Detroit is profound, and whites,

proportionally, are still leading the way. The city's population is now 82.2% African American

(up from 81.1% in 2000) and only 7.8% white (down from 10.5% in 2000) (United States

Census Bureau, 2010).

The abandonment of Detroit is profound. The 2010 census indicated that one-quarter of

Detroiters left their city in the last decade. The official population was 713,777, the lowest in a

century. The loss in the first decade of this century amounts to an average of almost 24,000 per

year. Among the nation's large cities, only hurricane-devastated New Orleans lost a larger

percentage of its inhabitants. Of the whites who remained in Detroit after decades of white

flight, 44 percent departed in the last decade, as did 24 percent of its black residents. (The

Hispanic population, which is concentrated in southwest Detroit, was stable.) (French, Fleming,

& Wilkinson, 2011). In 2010, one-third of the city's nearly 140 square miles consisted of

vacant, usually blighted properties; on the city's east side (which, in part, borders Grosse Pointe

Park), the percentage is closer to 80% (Gerritt, p. 24A). At this fall's auction of abandoned

properties in Wayne County, an estimated 15,000 offerings will be on the block, an area record;

the starting bid is just $500 (MacDonald, 2011, p. 10A). School closings, of course, are included

in the path of the human exodus. The Detroit Public Schools closed 33 buildings in 2007, the

largest single-year closing on record for any U.S. city (Pratt, 2007); just two years earlier, thirty

Detroit Public Schools and nine Detroit Catholic schools shut their doors (Pratt, Walsh-Sarnecki,

& Higgins, 2007).   Most recently, with state-appointed emergency financial manager Robert

Bobb at the helm, several additional Detroit Public Schools have closed, though not at the same

dramatic pace.

Violence, derelict buildings, and poverty are the dregs left to Detroit. The *New York*

Times reported in 2006 that Detroit is

the poorest big city in the nation, with a third of the population living below the poverty

line . . . [and] an annual competitor for the ignominious title of Murder Capitol. Last

year there were 359 homicides. Halfway through this year, there were 220. There are

about 10,000 unsolved homicides dating back to 1960. (LeDuff, 2006, p. A19)

The national and international perception about Detroit seems nearly unanimous: It is no longer

a symbol of

 industrial might or technological innovation. Rather, the city is frequently seen as

leading the nation in unemployment, poverty, abandoned factories, empty office

buildings, high crime, and bitter racial strife . . . .   No longer is Detroit a place where

blue-collar workers of all racial and ethnic groups can prosper together. It seems to have become the quintessential underclass city, and attracts only a sliver of the great stream of immigrants now coming to the United States from Latin America and Asia . (Farley, Danziger, & Holzer, 2000, p. 2)

Of course, Detroit's diminishing size, crime rate, and impoverishment render it the kind of place that most people would rather not think about. I know that I used to be blithely uninvolved in Detroit's problems. Growing up in western Michigan, Detroit was the gritty yet glamorous place that we visited for Detroit Tiger baseball games. Later, I heard–as though down a long string between two tin cans–the news of the city's accelerating decline. How pleasant it was to be safely on the other side of the state in Grand Rapids, Rockford, or Kalamazoo. Others describe the same response to Detroit. Robert Mast (1994), who compiled the oral histories of several Detroit progressives, entitled his project, "Who Cares About Detroit?" He claims that the title arose from experience: "I had asked several friends which publishers might be interested in a book on Detroit radicals, and that was always the response: 'Who cares about Detroit?'" (p. xiv). Caring about Detroit involves risk. Better to assume that Detroit's slide into ignominy is an anomaly. Herron (1993) tells about the reaction of his visiting acquaintances to Detroit. Many will say,

"Detroit looks just like a city!" It's easy to get defensive when people say things like that. At the same time, it's clear what they mean by their offending comparison. History, like the middle class who have usually imagined themselves its protagonists (at least for the last hundred years), has generally written off places like Detroit, so that it

comes as a shock to visitors when they find something here, especially something

downtown, and still in business, that they recognize as belonging to their native culture . .

. . . The recognition, however, is not entirely happy . . .; it raises the suspicion that if

Detroit really *were* a city–like other cities–then the things that have happened in it, and to

it, might happen anywhere . . . . [T]his accounts for the tentative, and perhaps cautionary,

observation that the place only *looks* like a city. Despite appearances, it really isn't one,

at least not any longer. Detroit has to be deprived of its reality so that everybody else can

feel better about theirs. (pp. 14-15)

Nevertheless, what Herron (1993) calls the *othering* of Detroit includes its own perils.

Many scholars and thoughtful writers have suggested that Detroit may be more representative

than not. In good times, America has wanted to claim Detroit as an emblem of itself. Thompson

(2001) writes, "In the 1940s, this city represented America's vision of itself as an 'arsenal of

democracy.' In the 1950s, it exemplified the best of postwar American consumerism and

productivity; in the 1960s, it was deemed a 'model' Great Society city" (p. 7).   In bad times,

Detroit remains an emblem. Stryker (2001) says that "Detroit has become a shorthand signifier

for a national identity crisis" (p. 3F). Herron puts it this way:

Detroit is the most representative city in America. Detroit used to stand for success, and

now it stands for failure. In that sense, the city is not just a physical location; it is also a

project, a projection of imaginary fears and desires. This is the place where bad times get

sent to make them belong to somebody else; thus, it seems easy to agree about Detroit

because the city embodies everything the rest of the country wants to get over. (p. 9)

The city reminds us of seemingly intractable urban problems common not just to Detroit, but to capitalism itself.   Historian Thomas Sugrue (2006) writes, "Detroit's postwar urban crisis emerged as the consequence of two of the most important, interrelated, and unresolved problems in American history: that capitalism generates economic inequality and that African Americans have disproportionately borne the impact of that inequality" (p. 5).

Coleman Young, Detroit's first African American mayor (who was elected in 1973 and served five terms), was the feisty rhetorical wizard who is often blamed–usually by whites, I have found–for many of Detroit's problems. Nevertheless, few can dispute his lifelong passion for the best interests of Detroit and for African American Detroiters in particular. Here is his colorful version of the Detroit-as-emblem theme:

> In the evolutionary urban order, Detroit today has always been your town tomorrow. Superannuated as it may seem in this late segment of a swirling century, troubled and forsaken as the times have conspired to leave it, Detroit remains a surpassingly purposeful place, as important to the nation right now as it has ever been–maybe more so, because right now it is telling us that the cities are in trouble. Detroit is the advance warning system–the flashing red light and siren–for what could be a catastrophic urban meltdown, and the country had damn well better pay attention (Young & Wheeler, 1994, pp. 2-3).

Paul Clemens, whose 2005 memoir chronicles his childhood as a white Detroiter, sees the "advance warning system" in terms of race relations. He writes,

Detroit's racial problems . . . are America's racial problems writ large . . . . Whites, a minority in Detroit for many decades now, may some decades hence become a national minority–not to the same extent, or with [the] same stark dichotomy as in Detroit, but still. The Motor City, as ever, remains ahead of the racial curve–a case study, or cautionary tale. (pp. 18-19)

Urban ethnographer Hartigan (1999) agrees. He says that white Detroit "as a local minority–a condition that whites will increasingly experience in the next century–is revealing in terms of how race can and will matter in this country" (p. 10). Hartigan uses ethnography in order to identify the ways in which race matters to white and black Detroiters on a daily basis.

Metro Detroit and Race Relations: A History of Conflict

"It would be difficult to overestimate the depth of racial tension surrounding Detroit."
–Mayor Coleman Young (Young & Wheeler, 1994, p. 284)

The friendships represented in this case study are performed on a social/cultural stage where a painful racial history has played itself out for hundreds of years. Again, the entire picture is not entirely bleak; for instance, Detroit was a major stop on the Underground Railroad during the Civil War, and both black and white Detroiters assisted the fugitive slaves. However, the Underground Railroad code name for Detroit was "Midnight," since it was the last stop before freedom (although Michigan was a free state, slave catchers from the South had a legal right to capture and return runaway slaves). "Dawn" on the Underground Railroad did not rise until the fugitives reached Ontario, Canada, just across the Detroit River. "Midnight" is

appropriate for Detroit in more than its Underground Railroad sense, since race relations in the area have often been far from enlightened.

Early History

From the very early history of Michigan, the situation for African Americans in Detroit was a mix of opportunity and oppression. Before statehood, "[T]he territorial legislature passed bills demonstrating that American blacks were to be treated as a different class of people" (Farley, et al., 2000, p. 17). Legislation discouraged black migration to Michigan. "Blacks (but not whites) moving to Michigan had to present a court-attested certificate of freedom, register with the clerk of the local court, and post a bond of $500 guaranteeing good behavior" (Farley et al., p. 18). When Michigan became a state in 1837, it was not a slave state, but it denied blacks the right to vote. With the right to vote went the right to serve on a jury. Blacks were also not allowed in Michigan military units, and a ban on interracial marriage was enacted soon after statehood (Castellanos, 1991).

Just before Michigan became a state, an event involving fugitive slaves became known as the Blackburn Riots of 1833, the first of many race-related riots in Detroit (Frost, 2007, p. 225). Thornton and Ruth Blackburn, escaped slaves from Kentucky, took refuge in Detroit in the 1830s. When their former owners tracked them down, the Wayne County sheriff detained them and was poised to extradite them. A throng of supporters came to their rescue. A melee ensued. The Blackburns and some of their supporters were able to escape across the river to Canada. The ensuing racial hostility was severe enough so that officials called in federal troops (Farley, et al., 2000).

During the Civil War, many Northern whites blamed blacks for the conflict between the states. Racial disturbances occurred in many Northern cities. Detroit's involved the 1863 accusation that William Faulkner, a restauranteur of mixed race, had sexually assaulted two girls, one white and the other black. When a white mob demanded that Faulkner be released so that they could lynch him, those escorting Faulkner to prison responded with gunfire. "Irish and German immigrants, undeterred and under the rallying cry 'Kill all the damned niggers!' proceeded to ransack, burn, and destroy homes and businesses in the black community as well as to physically attack innocent bystanders" (Smith, 1999, p. 29). Just as in the Blackburn Riots, federal troops were summoned to quell the violence. Before the troops prevailed, two hundred homes of black families were burned to the ground by angry whites (Hendrickson, p. 146). Out of this incident, city leaders decided that Detroit needed its own police force; thus racial violence was the catalyst for the formation of the Detroit Police Department (Smith, p. 30). William Faulkner was eventually convicted, served seven years' time, and then acquitted when one of the accusers admitted that the assaults never happened. Faulkner was freed and reimbursed for years of lost business (Farley et al., 2000, p. 19).

20th Century Prior to World War II

Detroit burst onto the world industrial map in the early part of the twentieth century due to the rise of the auto industry. The booming new production lines for automobiles also became significant battlefields for racial hostility. Although blacks from the South migrated en masse to Detroit because of the promise of factory jobs, many auto factories assigned blacks to separate, less desirable jobs, for example, "in the toxic cloud of the spray rooms, applying the black paint

that made the roadsters shine" or in the white-hot heat of the foundries. Even in places like the Ford plants, where blacks where allowed to work alongside whites, foremen gave orders using "nigger," and fellow workers harassed them. "Colored men had to guard against their workmates sabotaging their machines, breaking their tools, even taking a swing at them when they weren't looking" (Boyle, 2004, p. 107).

The Ku Klux Klan found that Detroit was excellent recruiting territory in the 1920s. Historian Kevin Boyle (2004) writes,

> The first Klan organizer had come to Detroit in 1921, just as the organization was trying to push its base into the urban North. He spent the next year spreading the carefully crafted message of moral renewal, 100 percent Americanism, anti-unionism, anti-Catholicism, anti-Semitism, and racism . . . . So great was the reception, the Klan could barely keep up with the flow of recruits. (p. 140)

Jacoby (1998) writes that by 1924, Klan members numbered more than 30,000 in Detroit; Klansmen and their supporters "almost succeeded in electing the mayor of the city," and even beyond the 1920s, "Klansmen were an important force in the police department" (p. 235).

Within this volatile context, yet another major, race-related riot flared in Detroit. Ossian Sweet, an M.D. and migrant to Detroit from Florida, purchased a house in a white neighborhood in 1925, just as Detroit's exploding population challenged and ossified the racial *de facto* boundaries: blacks in the squalid urban neighborhood called Black Bottom, whites anywhere else. As news of the sale to Ossian Sweet reached the white neighbors, they organized over the summer of 1925 in order to keep out the Sweet family. When the Sweets moved anyway in

early September, mobs formed each of the first two nights. On the second night, with Ossian,

his wife Gladys, and nine other black relatives, friends, and acquaintances fortified in the newly

purchased house, the white mob overcame police protection on the street. They began pelting

rocks at the house. Gunfire erupted from the second story of the house, killing a white man

across the street. The ensuing trials riveted Detroit, blacks around the nation, and to some

extent, the white press as well. The NAACP hired Clarence Darrow to defend the Sweet party.

Although the Sweet party was acquitted over two trials, both Gladys Sweet and the couple's

young daughter died of the tuberculosis that Gladys had contracted in prison. The family never

lived together in the house that they had purchased across the color line, although Gladys came

there to die after an attempted cure in Arizona. Several years later, Ossian Sweet died by suicide

(Boyle, 2004). The Sweet story, then, was a poignant one. Though they won significant

victories in court, the family saga ended tragically. Their story served as a cautionary tale to

other blacks in Detroit. As Farley, Danziger, and Holzer (2000) write,

> The Sweets symbolized black resistance to white violence, as well as the strong desire of
>
> middle-class African Americans to live in housing commensurate with their status. But
>
> the message this event sent to prosperous blacks of the 1920s was that moving into white
>
> neighborhoods had disastrous consequences. (p. 145)

In decades to come, integrated neighborhoods would become a central site of struggle within the

relationship of Detroit's black and white populations.

Detroit During World War II

World War II transformed Detroit into the "arsenal for democracy." Migrants from the south and immigrants from abroad seeking jobs in the military industries overwhelmed the already racially troubled city. A half million arrived between 1940 and 1943 alone. Brown (1944) claims that white migrants from the South perpetuated the racism of the Jim Crow era in their new home. Racist treatment at the war plants–including strikes by white workers when blacks were hired or promoted (Brown, 19444)–and racist housing practices persisted. A housing shortage, precipitated by the mass migration and limited options for black newcomers–ensued (Smith, 1999). The federal government built a housing complex for black workers, which was named after Sojourner Truth and completed in December of 1941. The fact that the complex was located outside of black neighborhoods met with massive organized resistance from whites. Violence erupted, including injuries and arrests. "Finally," social researchers Farley, Danziger and Holzer (2000) write, "1,100 city and state police officers and 1,600 members of the Michigan National Guard were mustered to guard the 168 black families who moved into the Sojourner Truth homes" (pp. 150-1). At last, the resistance movement among whites reluctantly acquiesced to their presence.

Sadly, the warning bell sounded by this conflict was not heeded by officials, and so this violent encounter proved to be a "dress rehearsal" (Brown, 1944, p. 24) for the catastrophic riot of 1943, which older Detroiters still remember. On a hot summer night that year on the bridge to Belle Isle, a popular Detroit park, fighting broke out in a mixed-race crowd of approximately 100,000. Rumors of the violence flew to the racially segregated neighborhoods. Hand-to-hand combat between white and black citizens, looting, and arson raged for days. In the end, 6,000

federal troops were summoned to quell the violence, and 34 Detroiters were killed (25 black and 9 white). Police, by their own records, were responsible for seventeen of the African American deaths. Hundreds more were injured, and property damage reached $2 million. In all, 1,800 people were arrested, 1,300 of them black. Although black Detroiters were harmed the most by the violence, Smith (1999) writes that "[c]ity and federal officials singled out blacks as the scapegoats for the entire disturbance" (p. 34).

Postwar Detroit: Where Were You in '67?

Detroit was a center for civil rights struggle. Rosa Parks, who became a leader in the civil rights movement against Jim Crow, made Detroit her home in 1957, soon after her historic bus ride in Montgomery, Alabama in 1955. Conservative whites galvanized their political power during the Cold War, gaining control of Detroit government by convincing white voters that blacks who moved into white neighborhoods were part of a Red invasion (Hoffer, 2006, p. 209). In the '60s, black Detroiters protested the disproportionate impact of urban renewal upon their neighborhoods. By March 1963, "urban renewal projects had demolished or were scheduled to demolish more than 10,000 structures" and "43,096 people, 70 percent of them black, had been displaced or were to be displaced" (Smith, 1999, p. 35). Also in 1963, Martin Luther King led a march in Detroit, in which he gave an early version of his famous "I Have a Dream" oration. Just before his death in 1968, King returned to metro Detroit to speak at a Grosse Pointe high school. The wealthy suburbs of Grosse Pointe were entirely white at that time, and King received a mixed reception (Sandoval, 2006, p. 2A). Some blacks in Detroit rejected the integrationist philosophy of Dr. King and embraced the Black Power separatist movement

(Hoffer, 2006). The black cultural scene–including writers, artists, activists and the thriving Motown musicians–was a happening place.

Sadly, the entire era is shrouded with the legacy of the summer of 1967. Jacoby (1998) writes, "1967 was the moment that forever sealed the fate of the Motor City: for whites, the end of an era, for blacks, the beginning of history" (p. 238). No newcomer to Detroit, I have found, can engage in a significant conversation about the city with a long-time resident without some mention of 1967.   But even in everyday discourse about their city's history, black and white Detroiters cannot come together. "The riots," whites call them–or, if you're speaking to a black Detroiter, "the rebellion" will be the likely term ("the" is the article of choice, even though the city has known many riots and rebellions). Smith (1999) writes of the black and white discourse that

> [t]he naming of the event was always highly contested. Many participants and members of the black community referred to the week as the "Great Rebellion" or the "July Rebellion of 1967." Most press coverage and historical accounts used the more common "Detroit Riot of 1967." The distinction between "riot" and "rebellion" revolved around motive. Black community leaders preferred "rebellion" since it implied that people were consciously reacting to economic oppression and racial inequality. The term "riot," by contrast, evoked a sense of randomness and irrationality, which many critics of the term believed placed too much emphasis on the behavior of participants rather than the material conditions that generated the outrage. (p. 195)

Whatever the name, the events of July 1967 were shattering to Detroit race relations, to its economy, and to its national image. The trigger for the catastrophe was small, a commonplace event in Detroit that led to uncommon devastation. It was no secret that black Detroiters resented the mostly white Detroit police (Smith, 1999, p. 242). This relationship was the tinder box for violence. Citing Fine (1989), the authors of *Detroit Divided* (2000) describe the flashpoint incident:

> A vice squad in the Twelfth Street neighborhood specialized in raiding "blind pigs"–that is, closing down establishments that offered gambling and sold liquor after hours . . . . Owners were fined $100, while the patrons would be booked and then released. After raiding four blind pigs that evening [July 23, 1967], two undercover officers gained entry to one . . . at around 4:00 on Sunday morning. They expected to find a dozen customers, but a party of eighty-two was celebrating the return of two servicemen from Vietnam. The clients were rounded up, and held on Twelfth Street for more than an hour, as there were not enough police vans to take them in for booking. A large crowd gathered and taunted the police. By the time the last arrestees were removed, bottles were being thrown at the police and windows broken. (Farley et al., p. 43)

The violence quickly accelerated and spun out of control. Arsonists torched Detroit, snipers took aim at police and fire fighters, and looters swarmed the streets. Although race is undoubtedly implicated in the ensuing chaos, this was not a "race riot" in the sense of the 1943 violence, with white citizens combating black citizens. Mayor Cavanaugh, who had attempted in his administration to bridge the divides in Detroit, chose a strategy of cordoning off and, he

hoped, isolating the violence. Thus the looters and arsonists in 1967 were mostly angry young

black men from black neighborhoods, and the greatest economic harm came to the black

communities they ravaged. Some blacks attempted to assist white police and fire fighters, while

an all-black fire-fighting squad was attacked just as much as their white fellows (Hoffer, 2006).

The Michigan National Guard responded to the crisis, as did 2,700 army paratroopers,

many of them with recent combat experience in Vietnam (Farley, et al., 2000, p. 44). The

conflict raged for days, with the following bitter tolls:

–The Detroit Fire Department responded to 3,034 calls in the week of July 23-30,

1967 (nearly 16 calls per hour).

–A total of 43 people died, including 33 blacks and 10 whites.

–Six-hundred ninety structures were destroyed or needed to be pulled down later

due to structural compromise (including 46 apartment houses, 139 one- and two-family

homes, 74 grocery stores, 26 drug stores, 27 dry cleaners, 19 clothing stores, 13 bars, 26

furniture stores, 20 warehouses, and 15 restaurants).

–Total property damage was estimated at $200 million.

–Two fire fighters were killed, 84 required medical attention, and approximately

200 more were injured but continued to report for duty.

–Forty-two other fire departments assisted.

–Thousands were arrested (estimates range from over three thousand to over

seven thousand), but only 34 were charged with crimes. (Hoffer, 2006; Mast, 1994;

Smith, 1999)

Hoffer, a historian who studied the Detroit violence of 1967 in the context of other urban fires of catastrophic proportions (e.g., Boston in 1760, Chicago in 1904, Oakland Hills/Berkley in 1991), concludes that

> [i]n the 1960s, widespread outbreaks of arson turned ghetto neighborhoods into war zones. The Detroit fire of 1967, the worst of these arsons, forced politicians to concede what the people of Detroit already knew–racism and racially based deprivation were not changed by the civil rights movement. Forty years after the fire, Detroit is still trying to recover. (p. 18)

Unlike the fires in other cities, this urban inferno did not lead to galvanized determination, a renewed (or brand-new) commitment to civil rights, or a boom in redevelopment; instead, this fire tells "a story about the corrosive power of hopelessness" (Hoffer, p. 204).

One immediate reaction to the calamitous events was an increase in local ownership of weapons. Jacoby (1998) writes that both urban neighborhoods and police departments immediately increased their stock of munitions. On an individual basis, people bought guns and learned how to use them. Handgun sales in the region doubled, and rifle/shotgun sales nearly tripled. Jacoby writes, "One famous evening newscast that particularly upset the black community featured a group of suburban housewives at the target range, trying out their new revolvers" (p. 240).

Furthermore, the ranks of white "suburban housewives" swelled. The events of this fateful summer hastened white flight, which was already well underway before 1967. But the riot/rebellion added greater panic to the process. Chafets (1990) writes,

For Sale signs sprung up in every white neighborhood, seemingly in front of every house. There had always been a lot of vacant land outside the city . . . ; now developers threw up houses, schools and shopping malls beyond Eight Mile Road. Some people were so panicked that they spent the winter of 1967-68 sleeping on their relatives' couches, or shivered in half-completed tract homes. The riot touched off an exodus that left Detroit with a black majority within five years. (p. 21)

Whites in this country, as many observers point out (among them, Boyle, 2004; Niebuhr, 1929/1956; and Young & Wheeler, 1994), may become virulently fearful when they are outnumbered, when they perceive that control has shifted away from them. Thus in the events of the summer of '67, we see the major impetus for the current, deeply entrenched racial segregation in metro Detroit.

Moving On: Transportation Battles Intensify Segregation

In 1969-1974, a racial turf war took place in the metro Detroit schools. In 1969, Federal District Judge Roth deemed that the Detroit Public Schools were systematically and intentionally segregated. He ordered a segregation plan involving predominantly white suburban school districts in the first suburban ring around Detroit. Since black children were already the majority in the city, the logic was that a city-only desegregation plan would be the catalyst for even more white flight. The suburbs fought the Roth plan, and their battle reached the Supreme Court in 1974. With Justice Thurgood Marshall among the dissenters in a 5-4 vote, the Court ruled in favor of the suburban districts. As expected, a city-only desegregation plan further accelerated white flight (Farley, R., Danziger, S., & Holzer, H., 2000, pp. 40-41, 47).

Metro Detroit's suburban population was in no mood, then, to allow a public

transportation plan that would blur the color line at the city's border. Batterman (2010) writes

that "[t]he story of the 1970s Detroit transit plan indicates that systems of racial segregation and

urban transportation have been mutually supportive" (p. 6). Despite federal support during the

pre-Reagan years and collaboration between The Southeastern Michigan Transit Authority,

Mayor Coleman Young, downtown business leaders, and Michigan's Republican governor, the

initially ambitious regional public transit plan was eventually whittled to a small-scale proposal

that went down to defeat in 1980, as suburban fear won the day. The rhetoric that characterized

the struggle was often graphic. For example, a suburban resident writing in 1980 to the *Oakland*

Press asks, "Why should the people of Oakland County finance a subway that will merely serve

as a pipeline for the vile contents of Detroit to pour out from the scum-hole of a city onto our

county?" (qutd. in Batterman, p. 92).   Today, the only trace of the once-ambitious transit

project–which included both subways and light rail that would have traversed Detroit and its

inner-ring suburbs–is the People Mover, an elevated train which carries passengers within a 0.3

square mile vicinity in the central business district. Batterman writes that while the defeated

transit plan

> had offered the possibility of horizontal integration, crossing the city-suburb color line
>
> and mixing residents on both sides, the People Mover brought vertical separation. The
>
> system formalized an underclass, allowing the privileged to take refuge from poor blacks
>
> in one of the few areas of the metropolis where they now crossed paths. (pp. 111-112)

Indeed, the infrastructure, political history, and economic reality surrounding transportation issues have worked toward the entrenchment of racial segregation. If white suburbanites choose to visit downtown Detroit, they can drive their cars on the interstate freeways (whose construction displaced black residents), bypassing urban neighborhoods at 70 mph. Once arriving at the desired event–perhaps an opera performance or Tiger game–they can ride the People Mover and/or take advantage of valet parking. The residents of Detroit, however, often have fewer options in traversing their city or crossing into suburban terrain. In a case of bitter irony, many descendants of slaves are now "captive riders"–a code term among transit planners for residents who depend on public transportation as their primary mode of transit (Batterman, p. 118). Nearly 30% of Detroit households do not have access to their own vehicles (Gerritt, 2011); Tim Roseboom, transit planner for the Detroit Department of Transportation (who is himself a Detroiter without a car), admits that "captive riders" in Detroit are regularly subjected to the unreliability and long commutes of the area's bus systems (personal communication, July 13, 2011). For lack of the very product for which their home city is famous, the easy mobility of African Americans in the Motor City is often limited to their own (segregated) neighborhoods.

Segregation as Legacy

Because black/white residential segregation is a fact of life for the participants in this case study and because metro Detroit segregation is what Massey and Denton (1992) call hypersegregation–an extreme version of the racial isolation that is commonplace in American

cities, I will explore the terrain of this social legacy a bit further. It is difficult, as Mayor

Coleman Young has said, to overestimate the depth of racial tension surrounding Detroit.

The fallout from the history that I have briefly outlined is that metro Detroit has become

one of the most segregated regions in the United States.[6] Over the years, white Detroiters were

responsible for racist practices in the realty, lending, and insurance industries; "protective"

neighborhood associations, harassment and violence have left black Detroiters, even today,

reluctant to move into white neighborhoods. Ultimately, however, the racial boundaries fell in

neighborhoods within the city limits. Black Detroiters, for decades now the majority racial group,

have exerted their political power, including a watershed event when they elected their first black

mayor, Coleman Young, in 1973. Whites, as I have described, fled to the suburbs and (for the

most part) have not returned.

Racial division, though sometimes met with apathy, has often stirred strong emotion in

metro Detroit. Charles Butler, African-American pastor of the New Calvary Baptist Church in

Detroit, put it this way:

> We witness a city surrounded by thriving communities on all sides. You drive across the
>
> city limits of Detroit and it's like going into another world: no vacant storefronts, the

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[6]Though metro Detroit "lost" its title of most segregated urban region in the country in the 2010 census (it is fourth now, after Milwaukee, New York, and Chicago), its rating on the index of dissimilarity is still very high (74, where 60 and above is considered highly segregated). (Wilkinson, 2011). Furthermore, there are indications that the current state of greater integration–though welcome–is only a way-station toward a new wave of white flight. Inner-ring school systems, for instance, are seeing dips in white enrollment as local parents choose public school districts that are further from Detroit, and these parents facilitate the commute of their children to whiter schools (French & Wilkinson, 2011).

lawns are green, the houses are occupied, and all the things that reflect affluence and well-

being. This drainage of the heart of a city seems impossible for it to have been accidental.

It had to be a planned, deliberate effort against persons who would be bold enough to seek

political liberation and the exercise of political power to the extent that Detroit has done it,

especially through its top administration here. It appears to be a way of saying, "Look, we

will teach you; we'll give you a real flogging; you slaves gonna have an uprising and

control the slave quarters, so we'll teach you how well you'll be fed, and housed, and

schooled, and what your health care will be like in the slave quarters." (qutd. in Mast,

1994, pp. 191-192).

Though more than a decade has passed since Butler's observation, and since then, the suburbs, as

well as the city have suffered in the recent recession, many area residents would still attest to the

stark contrast between the city and its suburbs–or, at least between the city and its outer rings of

suburbs. Many would still insist that the sentiment of Martin Luther King, Jr. applies to metro

Detroit: "The suburbs are white nooses around the black necks of the cities" (1967/1968, p. 233).

On the other side of the racial divide, one white spokesperson is Tom De Lisle, who grew

up in Detroit, served the administration of the last white mayor of Detroit, and worked for a local

TV station:

Everything goes back to the racial situation. Detroit has been the first American

city to cope with going from white to black. And whites left. That's the American

way–people have a right to move in, or move out. There's evidence to point out that

white people who moved had something to fear. Who wants to put their kids in a situation where they are likely to be crime victims? That's as basic as life gets.

> If I were mayor, I'd declare Detroit a disaster area . . . . It desperately needs national assistance. But Coleman Young has no compassion. He says, "Things have never been better." What a goddamned lie! The bottom line is, Detroit is an orphaned city . . . . What's happening here is the death of a city. (qutd. in Chafets, 1990, p. 27).

Again, a statement in 1990 about "the death of a city" cannot be rescinded today. *Time* magazine recently completed a year-long residential stint for some if its journalists, who focused exclusively on Detroit as a "city on life support" (Okrent, 2009, p. 26). Daniel Okrent, a native Detroiter who is white, wrote the opening print article for the Detroit series, in which he said that one's first instinct upon returning "is to weep" at "a landscape that bears a closer relation to a postapocalyptic nightmare than to the prosperous and muscular place I remember" (pp. 26, 28).

When white metro Detroiters rage or grieve (or in less emotionally charged contexts, express annoyance or cynical amusement) about what is happening within the city limits, they do so from an unaccustomed positionality, an outsider status. For within the city limits, whiteness is the marked identity, unlike the conditions in much of the country. Hartigan (1999) writes,

> "[B]lack power" shapes the politics; "black dollars" and "black fashion" define the landscape of consumption. This is not to make the absurd assertion that whiteness is irrelevant in Detroit; rather its operations do not possess a generically "unmarked" or "normative" character. White racialness, here, is the subject of frequent marking and is often chastised as being out of place. (p. 17)

Thus metro Detroit is a place where whiteness is marked in most parts of the city, blackness in most of the suburbs, and everyone needs to cope with the ramifications of hypersegregation.

Although black political power is concentrated by segregation, material conditions are also affected–often in the direction of diminished quality of life for all concerned. Social and linguistic isolation can contribute to an intense concentration of poverty and joblessness in black neighborhoods, according to Massey and Denton (1992). Isolation of blacks from whites can also exacerbate resentment: "If one group has been the target of discrimination for generations and if many members of a more prosperous and powerful group harbor negative sentiments about a minority, residential concentration may be harmful" (Farley et al., 2000, p. 175). These authors continue by citing a landmark study by Gunnar Myrdal, in which he "concluded that residential segregation denied blacks access to schools, parks, and opportunities available to whites, and it allowed local and state officials to provide African Americans with second-rate services" (Farley et al., p. 175; Myrdal, 1944, pp. 618-22).

Firsthand, I have seen Myrdal's (1944) observations embodied in Detroit. In recent years, suburban schools (including those in Dearborn, Birmingham, and the Grosse Pointes) have been policing registrations to keep out students from "low-performing" (i.e., typically Detroit) schools (Warikoo, 2007, Feb. 12, p. 3A). "Our" parks in Grosse Pointe are open to residents only (bar-coded ID cards and gate attendants enforce the policy); meantime, nearby Detroit parks are overused and/or undermaintained. Although the suburbs are dotted with national chain grocers, no chain grocery stores are operating in all 139 square miles of Detroit. Issues related to basic services–including access to medical care, reasonable water rates, adequate snow plowing,

operational street lights, trash pick-up, speed limit enforcement, and response time to

emergencies–are constant worries in Detroit. According to one local poll in the last decade,

metro Detroiters are concerned about problems like suburban sprawl and the corresponding long

commutes, inflated housing prices outside the city corresponding to low housing values within it,

and high black infant mortality–all problems that are associated with segregation (Upton &

Trowbridge, 2002).

Why do hypersegregation and its concomitant problems persist in metro Detroit?

Certainly Detroit is not alone in experiencing race riots and white flight. Why hasn't it joined

other urban centers that are recovering, even thriving in the early 21st century? Experts posit their

reasons. Farley, Danziger, and Holzer (2000) state, "Overt discrimination brought about the

racial isolation. Several additional reasons explain its persistence" (p. 213).   First of all, the

population of Detroit has not grown, causing no need for new housing in Detroit. New

neighborhoods might allow for more integration. Second, Detroit has remained a predominantly

black/white city, without a sizable influx of any new ethnic/racial group(s). Third, housing values

in Detroit have plummeted, making it difficult for blacks to "trade up" into the suburbs or

integrated neighborhoods in Detroit (the few that there are) (p. 215). On this last point, the

tendency of whites not to move into a majority black neighborhood is exacerbated, since research

by the authors demonstrated that whites are very concerned about housing values. So even

though their research shows that both blacks and whites express very few overtly discriminatory

opinions, whites "think they have little to gain from residential integration and much to lose" (p.

215). Kevin Boyle (2007) agrees that housing values are a key factor. As a historian, he

recognizes that people didn't come to Detroit for the natural beauty, the pleasant climate, or the charm of the neighborhoods. They came for jobs. Economic survival and possible prosperity were the top priorities. And so, when people have succeeded to the extent that they could buy their own homes, they have been fiercely protective of property values. When blacks were perceived to be a threat to property values, they were systematically (often legally and violently) excluded from white neighborhoods. Though real estate discrimination is now illegal, it still happens through the enduring structural apparatus of the real estate industry. Indeed, in recent years local realtors–including the realty firm that sold us our house–were investigated for racial steering into black or white neighborhoods, depending on the race of the potential buyers (Warikoo, 2007, Jan. 26, p. 3B).

Furthermore, politicians do not evidence much drive to work toward integration (for which, of course, they would need a mandate from voters). Public discourse about race is a political minefield in metro Detroit. Historically, the only safe territory on the campaign trail has been where city candidates bash the isolationist whites in the suburbs, and suburban candidates assure voters that they will keep out big city problems (Gorchow, 2007, p. 5B).[7]

My personal theory about why segregation is so pervasive is a distillation of what I have seen, heard, and read. It involves two contrasting narratives. The narratives have endless variations, but the basic story lines are clear. The narrative of black metro Detroiters goes something like this:

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[7]Current Detroit Mayor Dave Bing has fought this trend and embraced regionalism, but thus far the reciprocating embrace of his city and its suburbs–as well as the results he promised–have been tentative at best.

We came to this country as slaves and endured centuries of oppression. When we escaped slavery and Jim Crow in the South, we thought we were arriving in a promised land where good jobs were plentiful. The reality was different. Detroit really didn't want us. The factory bosses mistreated us, and the citizens relegated us to the worst neighborhoods. Racist harassment and violence met us any time we resisted (and often when we were just minding our own business). We vented our rage in the civil disturbances that white folks call riots. We elected our own mayor. We took over neighborhoods, and we took control of Detroit. You white folks ran away. Now when we have problems, you blame them on us, but that's just blaming the victim, and it's patently unjust.

The white story of segregation in metro Detroit goes like this:

We built Detroit and it was a good place. The birth of the auto industry, the rise of the middle class through unionization: It all happened here. Detroit was a hub of opportunity for people of all ethnicities and races. Yes, there was racial tension, but it could have been managed. 1967 changed all that. The riots showed that we weren't wanted any more. Detroit became a violent, frightening place. The blacks who took over trashed the city in every way. We left because we had to. Coleman Young was a disaster. Instead of healing divisions, he cut them deeper. Now when we go back to our old neighborhoods, they may not even exist any more. We might be willing to help Detroit, but we feel helpless. The problems are huge, and Detroit doesn't seem to want white people any more.

Both narratives, it seems to me, make reasonable sense out of experience. The diametrically opposed perceptions within the two narratives are a daily source of stress and hostility. These are powerful stories. Although I am still a relatively new observer to the area, I would venture to claim that nearly all black and white metro Detroiters–natives or newcomers–are socialized into some version of one or the other of these narratives (or possibly both, resulting in a unique identity anxiety). I am not the only observer who has claimed that two clear sides have been drawn in metro Detroit. Chafets (1990) puts it this way: "Each side has an orthodox, almost ritual explanation for what has happened to the city they once shared and no longer do, and, not surprisingly, each side blames the other" (p. 25). These two metanarrative accounts correspond to what Yamamoto (1999) calls "stock stories," which are

> narratives shaped, told, and embraced by groups about themselves and others. They are usually a conglomeration of group members' selective historical recollections, partial information about events and socioeconomic conditions, and speculations about the future. Some of these narratives are tied to time and place; some transcend temporal and physical boundaries. As forms of cultural representation, the narratives create social identities for the group members. They also influence the dynamics of interracial relations by providing the lens through which group members see and understand other groups. (p. 180)

The danger, of course, is that the lenses of stock stories constrain social relations to the boundaries and identities shaped by the past. In metro Detroit, resisting these entrenched stock

stories, including the blame game on both sides, may result in personal, social, and perhaps even professional risks.

This Researcher on the Detroit/Grosse Pointe Border

Whites in the city said 'Di-troit,' accent on the second syllable; blacks said 'Dee-troit,' accent heavily on the first; and Grosse Pointe girls whose noses sought a certain altitude ironically parroted the French pronunciation–'Day-twa'–to highlight how poorly European refinement squared with Rust Belt reality. (Clemens, 2004, p. 17)

Following Martin Luther King's 1963 march in Detroit, Detroiter Jeannette Anderson may have echoed the sentiments of many when she said that she "doubted that the marchers had gained anything. Maybe the talk helped them feel better, but no one is going to let them into Grosse Pointe." (qutd. in Smith, 1999, p. 51)

It strikes me that the defining quality of the African American experience has not been our enslavement but rather our homelessness. As I viewed a poster advertising a 1769 auction of human cargo . . . I also envisioned a threshing machine revving up its engines, separating families and cutting individuals off at the roots at every turn, starting with extraction from the African continent, through the Middle Passage, to the division of families on the slave market to the Great Migration, to the search for employment after Jim Crow and in the aftermath of centuries of forced degradation, unable to claim a home in White society, a place of unequivocal welcome and stability. (Rolling, 2010, p. 23)

I must say it plain: Grosse Pointe, where I live, has not been that "place of unequivocal welcome and stability" that African Americans seek in this society. "***Inhospitality*!**" my husband used to say. "One of the core values of the Grosse Pointes is ***inhospitality*.**" As a pastor on the Grosse Pointe/Detroit border and a newcomer to metro Detroit, his professional and personal instincts were trained on "core values." He felt the inhospitality himself and grieved his new community's relational stance of inhospitality toward African Americans.

Reluctantly, I need to tell the story of Detroit and segregation in this proposal because it is the context for the relationships that I have studied and also because it is the current story of my life. When we moved to Michigan in 2005, we moved to 100 year-old Grosse Pointe Park, which, along with the other four Grosse Pointes (GP City, GP Shores, GP Farms, and GP

Woods), is one of "the nation's most attractive suburbs" (Farley, et al., 2000, p. 158). The Grosse

Pointes have a reputation for wealth and the kind of snobbery portrayed in the Clemens's (2004)

epigraph. Life in the land of large old homes, well-manicured landscaping, lacrosse, yacht clubs,

and fancy cars is good. Violence is low. When our family first moved to Grosse Pointe, a

murder in one of the Grosse Pointes that had occurred several months earlier was a big story. It

was the first Grosse Pointe murder any one could remember in more than thirty years.

But our quarter of Grosse Pointe Park is not the desirable one. We live a few blocks east

of Alter Road, appropriately named, since the landscape certainly alters at this Detroit/Grosse

Pointe border. Several of the east/west residential streets on the Grosse Point side of Alter have

been barricaded by the city of Grosse Pointe Park in order to limit traffic flow (Batterman, 2010,

p. 117). Although our sturdy, 1920's brick bungalow near Alter Road is the most beautiful of

the three homes we have owned, it sits on a small lot, close to our neighbors. Although single-

family homes dominate our street, the adjacent streets host a number of beautiful old "flats," two-

story, multiple-family dwellings that are a Grosse Pointe aberration since they predominantly

house renters. This area of Grosse Pointe Park is known to locals as "the cabbage patch." Even

worse, we are in the block of Grosse Pointe Park that is adjacent to Mack Avenue, the border with

Detroit. Before I even had a conversation with our next-door neighbor, I found her picking up

litter from our lawn, muttering about the "trash that blows over from Detroit." We are a half-

block away from a city that often feels like another country. You can see it on Mack Avenue: On

the Grosse Pointe Park side there are pleasant shade trees, flourishing businesses and restaurants,

well-maintained street lights, colorful city banners, and, on our corner, Dylan's, a tony seafood

bar. Even the empty story fronts have neat awnings, discreetly frosted glass, and attractive

landscaping courtesy of the city. On the Detroit side, vacant businesses dominate. The street

lights are mounted on rugged telephone poles; storefronts include a heavily fortified Chinese

take-out (with plexiglass, barred windows and a security grate over the door), the Spirit of Love

storefront church, Da' Barber Shop, and the Village Idiot Pub, now closed. No shade trees,

banners, or landscaping. Even the color of the streetlights is different; on the Detroit side, they

are sepia-tone, while on the Grosse Pointe side, they are stark white. The streetlight colors and

the pedestrians correlate, since on the Detroit side they are mostly black; on "our" side, they are

mostly white.

In the past, the Grosse Pointes had sinisterly genteel methods of enforcing segregation.

Neighborhood mobs with rage generated by neighborhood association meetings would have been

unseemly. Instead, the lines were drawn firmly under cover of the realty profession. In addition

to restrictive covenants that barred homes from being sold to African Americans (enforcement of

these was struck down in 1948, but they still were written into deeds even afterward; Farley et al.,

2000, p. 152), the Grosse Pointes used a "point system" to bar "undesirables" during a critical

postwar period in area housing, 1945-1960. "Points were awarded on the basis of the applicant's

swarthiness or appearance, religious affiliation, club memberships, absence of accent in spoken

English, neatness, and whether the way of life seemed 'typically American.' Negroes, Orientals,

and Mexicans where categorically excluded" (Farley, et al., 2000, p. 158). Private investigators

hired by Grosse Pointe realtors and the Grosse Pointe Property Owner's Association completed a

questionnaire on potential buyers of Grosse Pointe homes. Some of the questions were these:

–If not American born, how long have the applicants lived in this country?

–Is their way of living typically American?

–Are the husband's immediate associates typical?

–Are their friends predominantly typical?

–Dress–neat, sloppy, flashy or conservative?

–Grammar–good fair or poor?   (Cosseboom, 1972, p. 6)

Investigators computed the scores for potential buyers in the Grosse Pointes and turned them over to realtors. Cosseboom writes in *Grosse Pointe, Michigan: Race Against Race* that "[t]he maximum score for the survey was 100. A score of 50 was acceptable for many persons. However, persons of Polish descent had to score 55, Greeks 65, Italians 75 and Jewish people 85" (p. 6). When the point system was exposed in 1960, many residents were surprised at its existence. Then attitudes ranged anywhere from guilt that such a system existed in their community to defensiveness (since it purportedly kept up property values, and people should be able to control what kind of neighborhood they live in) (Cosseboom, pp. 6-8).

For my own part, I am enraged that such a shameful system barred African Americans for so long from owning homes in beautiful Grosse Pointe Park. I am also, in my more humble and candid moments, guiltily grateful that my neighborhood doesn't look the like the blighted and largely abandoned ones directly across Mack Avenue.

Most Grosse Pointers (yes, the common moniker does sound like a thoroughbred dog) seem, on the surface, untroubled by the segregation that huddles these wealthy, predominantly

white suburbs between Detroit on the west and Lake St. Clair on the east. One writer describes the mentality characteristic of the "Grosse Pointe stereotype" this way:

> Pointes residents think of themselves as typical Americans who happen to have a little more money than most–and at the same time as clearly different from the rest of Michiganders.

> This seeming contradiction is not a problem for people in the Pointes (Cruden, 2006, p. 4A).

Actually, many contradictions and contrasts here *are* a problem for me, starting with the one I've admitted above: that I hate both racism and the fact that I benefit from its practices.

As a white middle-class woman, the daughter of an architect who sensitized me to beauty and ugliness in spacial environments, and a religious person who likes to think of herself as situated on the Christian left, I face daily perplexity about what I experience on this urban/suburban border. How I can possibly construct an identity that is livable in this divided and divisive social world? Back when my husband and I worked in Kalamazoo, Michigan, we lived in a mostly African American urban neighborhood. I was a leader in the campaign (which was eventually lost) to keep a religious grade school from moving away from our neighborhood and into the mostly white suburbs. Here, I have found myself not knowing what to do. Before he died, both my husband and I felt we ought to move into Detroit; there are still well-kept Detroit neighborhoods near the Grosse Pointe Park church where my husband worked. But what to do if there's an emergency and the police don't arrive? That's a common worry in Detroit. And what about those higher insurance rates and property taxes just a half-block away in Detroit? And

what if we would experience the violence that seems to be the eventual lot of every Detroiter? What would happen to our finely-tuned sense of social justice then?

Thus we did not move into Detroit, and we do not have the most obvious personal investment–property ownership–within the city limits of Detroit. I admit that dissertation research on the narratives of black and white women friends in metro Detroit is a rather timid response to personal conflict. But I at least it is a positive one–one that affirms the bridge-building efforts of others–and one that has been receptive to the stories that women more invested in metro Detroit than I am have told me. Their stories have, in the end, enlightened and revised my own.

Participants in this Study within the Context of Metro Detroit

Based on the history and material conditions of segregation here, the friends who have participated in this research have built their relationships across a socially constructed racial divide. They have co-constructed new narratives that integrate and/or resist the dueling metanarratives that I've offered above. Even though their co-construction sometimes seems effortless, the work of building friendships between people of European and African descent can be formidable. In addition to the legacy of slavery that still haunts every layer of this society, friends here need to cope with the unique history of Detroit and its legacy of segregation. In the first place, the friends needed to find one another. As Myrdal noted already in 1944, segregation allows few opportunities for people of different races to make personal acquaintance with one another and recognize that the "other" is a person much like oneself (p. 391). Much more recently, Dan Georgakas, author of *Detroit: I Do Mind Dying,* writes that in Detroit, "[r]acial

gaps are greater today than when I first became politically active. There are fewer points of natural conjunction. To put it another way, you have to say, 'Okay, I'm going to be sure to go out and make this contact'" (qutd. in Mast, 1994, p. 293). Even when people do make contact and eventually become friends, the road may be made impassible by others. Cynthia Newell, an African American who moved from Detroit into a mostly white suburb in the early 1990s, reported that "I had a white friend that I lost my friendship with because they kept calling her 'nigger lover' whenever we walked to the store. They threw eggs at her when she was with me" (qutd. in Trowbridge & Brand-Williams, 2002). Though such an example seems extreme and twenty years out-of-touch with metro Detroit's race relations, racism still clouds the social/geographic climate here. As just one example, last July, several homes in Eastpointe[8] received racially threatening letters, and one home on the affected street experienced "an apparent arson fire" (Ferretti, 2010, p. 1A). Those who wish to bridge the racial divide and become friends in such a social/geographic climate are brave souls indeed.

Certainly not all efforts at friendship are met with such overt hostility, but serious disapproval from same-race family and friends may be more subtle, as McCullough (1998) found in her study of cross-race friends. Furthermore, many women in metro Detroit can remember an era when relationships between black and white women were defined predominantly by the constraints of the employer/employee power structure. Farley, Danziger, and Holzer (2000) describe how, with the rise of the auto industry (which discriminated against black workers),

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[8]The name "Eastpointe" is a classic case of an inner-ring suburb attempting to distance itself from Detroit. Until 1993, Eastpointe was East Detroit, but residents voted to change the name of their city so that it affiliated more closely with the neighboring Grosse Pointes.

white male auto workers found their wages rising. In turn, "there was a tremendous demand for the labor of African American women: white women hired black women to do their domestic service" (p. 31). Singer Mary Wells talks about this kind of work as the drudgery that Motown helped her escape:

> Until Motown, in Detroit, there were three big careers for a black girl: babies, the factories, or daywork, Period . . . . Daywork they call it. And it was damn cold on the hallway linoleum. Misery is Detroit linoleum in January–with a half frozen bucket of Spic and Span. (qutd. in Hirshey, 1984, pp. 140-141)

In some cases, I am sure, the employer/employee relationship still constrains the relationships of white and black women–sometimes in cultural memory, and sometimes also in present reality. My personal and ethnographic experience bears out this assumptions. And when the historical employer/employee identity for relationships between white and black women is deeply entrenched, it constrains the foregrounding of other bases for relationships.

Relatedly, historian Sugrue (2006) writes about how larger structural elements within a society constrain smaller ones: "Economic and racial inequality constrain individual and family choices. They set the limits of human agency. Within the bounds of the possible, individuals and families resist, adapt, or succumb" (p. 5). Sugrue speaks specifically about individuals and families, but his logic is applicable to friendships as well. The agency of friends is shaped by the economic, racial, and historical context of their friendship.

Chafets (1990), a Detroiter who later became an Israeli citizen and a journalist, illustrates from his own experience how a larger cultural narrative can both enable and constrain a smaller-

scale, personal narrative. Chafets's lifelong fascination with Detroit began with his friendship

with Charles, an African American boy with whom he grew up. Although the boys learned about

one another's African American and Jewish white cultures, their

> knowledge was the by-product of a boyhood friendship. I was no teenage anthropologist,
>
> and mostly I concentrated on having a good time. Charles took me to breakfast dances . . .
>
> and sock hops at the Colored Elks. We played ball together; listened to B.B. King, Nolan
>
> Strong and the Drifters on his mother's phonograph; sat in the park outside the recreation
>
> center and flirted with the neighborhood girls. (pp. 10-11)

Although the clash of cultures eventually severed their relationship for several years, their

ordinary shared interests bonded the friends, and they reunited in middle age. Similarly, the

participants in this case study have discovered shared interests and values–some involving race

and others transcending it–that have sustained their friendships over time and space in metro

Detroit.

The Word for a City

It has been a rare experience to meet with these white and colored leaders and talk over our race problems. The situation which the colored people of the city face is really a desperate one, and no one who does not spend real time in gathering the facts can have any idea of the misery and pain which exists among these people, recently migrated from the south and unadjusted to our industrial civilization. Hampered both by their own inadequacies and the hostility of a white world they have a desperate fight to keep body and soul together, to say nothing of developing those amenities which raise life above the brute level.
–Reinhold Niebuhr, theologian and pastor in Detroit (1929/1956, p. 143)

Although the city [Detroit] is typically American in many respects, it represents to an exaggerated degree the forces of conflict within our boundaries.
–Earl Brown, journalist investigating the 1943 riot (1944, p. 2)

Detroit's decline has many parents . . . . Conservatives cite unions and Democratic welfare-state policies; liberals blame business, white flight and trade deals. And that's before locals get into the act with

Detroiters blaming the suburbs and Republicans and suburbanites blaming former Mayor Coleman Young and forced busing.   –Daniel Howes, Detroit journalist (2011, p. 3B)

"We're a tough town. If you look back where we were in the '60s ans where we are today, there were a lot of, not bumps in the road, but major, major catastrophes. But because the town was strong, they've been able to overcome that . . . . We have our problems, but we're willing to fight."
                                          –Emmett Moten, Detroit developer and former aide to Mayor Colman
                                          Young (qutd. in Schaefer & Gallagher, 2011, p. 3A)

"Fist of Joe Louis," by R. Graham, 1986, Hart Plaza, downtown Detroit. Photo by D. J. Seltzer, www.RoadsideArchitecture.com. Used with permission.

Although Chafets (1990) and the friends I have interviewed and many others have made friends across the racial divide in metro Detroit, "friendship" is not the signature word for this metro area. I conclude this chapter on metro Detroit with a distillation of the history, material conditions, and social landscape that I have briefly traversed. For me, at least, this distillation culminates in a single word: *fight*. Four points are pertinent here. First, this distillation is my own, although based upon many representations of experiences besides my own. Other

observers, however, would and do read another word–though perhaps a related one–in the social climate. Second, I need to emphasize that *fight* characterizes not only Detroit proper, but all of metro Detroit, including the sprawling suburbs, where the feisty rhetoric of territorial public officials is often heard. We metro Detroiters–urban and suburban, of diverse racial identities and socioeconomic status–tend to be fighters. Third, *fight* is not a wholly negative read of the social climate. Fighting is, after all, a survival response. A willingness to struggle for and with others has sometimes resulted in positive change for metro Detroit. It is a contributing factor to the resilience of the city. However, in my personal and professional experience at this research site and in the context of a study of friendship across a social divide, the will to fight is mostly valenced negatively. The friends in this research study have worked successfully with and against the will to fight, but for most metro Detroit residents, a fighter's stance has probably not been conducive to the initiation and maintenance of interracial relationships.

Fourth, the idea of characterizing a social location by a single word did not originate with me. Gilbert (2006), whose memoir takes her to Rome for an extended stay, has this conversation with Giulio, a local. He asks about her impressions of Rome, and Gilbert writes:

I told him I really loved the place, of course, but somehow knew it was not my city, not where I'd end up living for the rest of my life . . . .

Giulio said, "Maybe you and Rome just have different words."

"What do you mean?"

He said, "Don't you know that the secret to understanding a city and its people is to learn–what is the word of the street?"

Then he went on to explain, in a mixture of English, Italian, and hand gestures, that every city has a single word that defines it, that identifies most people who live there. If you could read people's thoughts as they were passing you on the streets of any given place, you would discover that most of them are thinking the same thought. Whatever that majority thought might be–that is the word of the city. And if your personal word does not match the word of the city, then you don't really belong there.

"What's Rome's word?" I asked.

"SEX," he announced.

"But isn't that a stereotype about Rome?"

"No."

"But surely there are some people in Rome thinking about other things than sex?"

Giulio insisted: "No. All of them, all day, all they are thinking about is SEX." . . .

Now if you believe Giulio, that little word–SEX–cobbles the streets beneath your feet in Rome, runs through the fountains here, fills the air like traffic noise. Thinking about it, dressing for it, seeking it, considering it, refusing it, making a sport and game out of it–that's all anybody is doing. Which would make a bit of sense as to why, for all its gorgeousness, Rome doesn't quite feel like my hometown. Not at this moment of my life. . . . Therefore, Rome's word, as it spins though the streets, just bumps up against me and tumbles off, leaving no impact. I'm not participating in the word, so I'm not fully living here. It's a kooky theory impossible to prove, but I sort of like it.

Giulio asked, "What's the word in New York City?"

I thought about this for a moment, then decided. "It's a verb, of course. I think it's ACHIEVE." . . .

I asked Giulio, "What's the word in Naples?" He knows the south of Italy well.

"FIGHT," he decides. "What was the word in your family when you were growing up?"

That one was difficult . . . . But Giulio was already on to the next and most obvious question: "What's your word?" (pp. 102-104)

I have concluded that the word for metro Detroit, like the word for Naples, is *fight*.[9] This idea is more than what Gilbert calls it, "a kooky theory impossible to prove"; it arises out of the narrative of Detroit not as kooky theory, but as Nair (2003) characterizes it, "theory in the round" (p. 30). Detailed consideration of every aspect of local discourse is outside the scope of this dissertation, but I see and hear how labor/management relations, city council and school board deliberations, transit planning meetings, and area politics are characteristically adversarial in metro Detroit. Everybody is *fighting*. Relations between neighborhoods, owners versus renters, natives versus outsiders, and suburbanites versus Detroiters–they all tend to be battlegrounds. Even our well-groomed spaces versus our blight, as well as our public art (the most notable example being the sculpture represented in this chapter, which faces the border with Canada) reflect conflict.

In terms of the racial history that I have outlined in the preceding section, the *fight* theme is obvious. From the time of its early history, through its efforts both to assist and to recapture fleeing slaves, through decades of battle lines over housing and into deadly, race-related violence

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[9]For the emergence of this word (out of a range of possibilities that include *conflict*, *troubling*, *desperation*, *entitlement*, *insular*, *marginalized*, and *dysfunctional*), I am deeply indebted to the *Arc of Justice* discussion group, who also discussed this topic with me via email.

and arduous political turmoil over transportation, metro Detroit has always been up for a *fight*.

The enduring instinct to fight indicates the kind of ghostly presence that Gordon (2008) writes

about. According to Gordon, a ghost of oppressive social practices like slavery and forced

segregation may inhabit a social space for centuries. A ghost is always distinctive in that it

propels people toward "a something to be done" (p. 139). That "something to be done" in metro

Detroit's case, is *fight*. The legacy of centuries of fighting has bereft the city limits of more than

half of its 1950 population, much of its economic muscle and visual appeal, and even drained its

gritty determination. The suburbs, by contrast, may sometimes seem to be thriving–at least

economically–but the entrenched interpersonal and political battle lines are enduring scars on the

suburban social geography.

III. PLAN OF INQUIRY AND ANALYSIS

Plan of Inquiry

Investigators often find that their best access to personal relationships is found in participants' narratives about those relationships . . . . Like the moving tree branches that indicate the presence of wind, stories proclaim the presence of relationships. (Conville, 1998, p. 21).

Summary of Research Stages

The stages in the plan of inquiry for this study of women's friendship narratives developed as follows:

1. Acquaintance with metro Detroit as a social location and research site (approximately 3 ½ years before the invitation of participants), including building relationships; participating in community organizations; visiting a variety of local places of interest; becoming acquainted with local history (through conversation, document research, and a book group discussion of Boyle, 2005); writing field notes; and auditing of a course on the African American poetry of Detroit (at Wayne State University).

2. Research methods survey of women who are invested in cross-race friendships.

3. Invitation to participate in the interracial friendship study.

4. The interracial friendship research.

    a.) preliminary demographic questionnaire

    b.) a project for friends: Our Friendship Story

    c.) a three-person interview (researcher and each friendship dyad)

    d.) follow-through interview (researcher and each friendship dyad)

Research documents generated in this process include the survey, questionnaire, and Our Friendship Story responses; field notes (including notes on the ethnographic site, notes the meetings with the friends, and scratch notes as I returned to listen to interview recordings); and transcripts of all interviews. Each friendship pair provided multiple examples of the primary unit of analysis, which was the incident narrative within the longer friendship story.

Although the four steps above seem to be listed chronologically, my acquaintance with metro Detroit informed the entire research process and deepened as I proceeded. In the following pages, I will detail the methodology of steps two through four of this research.

Research Methods Survey

The research methods survey arose out of my feminist commitment to consult women who are invested in interracial friendships about their methods preferences. I wanted to give more than a cordial nod to the idea that those who are researched should have a say in how they are represented, and how they are represented begins with how they are researched.[10]

Thus I developed a research methods survey, which included a cover letter, a one-page description of research methods, and a three-item survey about research methods preferences. I invited women of my acquaintance who are invested in interracial friendships to participate in the

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[10]Granted, the accomplishment of my ideal is diminished by the fact that I did not consult the research participants themselves; instead, I consulted others who, like the future participants, are invested in cross-race friendships. I did not survey the participants in metro Detroit because a.) I could achieve a larger sample by contacting people that I know in other places, and b.) I did not want to risk belaboring the research process for local participants, who will already be offering a large amount of time and energy during the primary research process. However, a future study that incorporates this preliminary step into the research process with primary participants is a worthy goal.

survey.[11] Twenty-four women eventually responded to the survey, either by email, phone, or conventional mail (their choice). The summary of their responses may be found as Appendix A of this proposal.

My intention in analyzing the survey data was to look for patterns of preferences that would shape the dissertation research methods. I also wanted to notice the kinds of anxieties that I might need to allay in the research process. Seeking a racially balanced analytical perspective on this data, I invited the collaboration of Katia Campbell, Ph.D., who at the time of her contribution to this study was serving as an adjunct professor of Communication at the University of Denver. Since Campbell is an African American woman scholar, her insights about the survey data were particularly relevant.

Twenty-four survey respondents is a relatively small sample, and I do not claim that the results indicate clear statistical significance. However, I was looking for general impressions of the women's preferences, and I saw fairly strong trends in both the collated methods preferences and the comments that the women wrote. Based on my own and Katia's Campbell's analyses of the survey data, I chose to shape the dissertation research methods in the following ways:

1. I chose not to integrate certain research methods into the study design. Before conducting the survey, I thought that journal entries, focus groups, photo elicitation, and visual

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[11]I specified in the Human Research Committee Request for Review that the participants would be women of my acquaintance or those who received word of my survey from these women. As it turned out, respondents came from both of these groups and from a few women notified by the latter group (acquaintances of those acquainted with my friends).

I did not send the survey to any one that I knew was currently working in academe, since I wanted to avoid the possibility that an academic lens on the research methods would take precedence over a relational lens.

representation (which provides an analogy for the friendship) might be promising methods. However, I did not use them because they were not preferred by most survey respondents.

2. I began the research with a short demographic survey, since participants generally seemed to associate that method with research that was within their range of knowledge and comfort (and it also allowed me to assess whether or not potential participants met the criteria for this case study).

3. Three-person interviews, I determined, would provide primary data for the dissertation research. This method received the strongest endorsement from survey respondents (taking questions 1 and 2 together).

4. I proceeded with narrative as the focus of my study. Although none of the survey questions specifically asked respondents to relate their stories of friendship, a number of participants mentioned the discourse of stories nevertheless. "Tracy," for instance, said that in a three-person interview "we could remind one another of situations or tell our own side of each story which may or may not be the same. I would guess our perspectives might be different considering our cultural differences."   "Denebah" said she'd be most comfortable with a three-person interview, "especially if there is chocolate in the room, because honestly together we'd be giggling as we attempted to tell all the 'remember when' stories."

5. Cues from the survey results gave rise to Our Friendship Story. Although this method was not specifically included on the survey, most survey respondents favored methods involving interaction; they seemed poised to talk about their friendships, and Our Friendship Story gave the dissertation participants an opportunity to do just that. It also offered each participant one-on-one

time with the person with whom she was were most comfortable: her friend (in contrast to me, the researcher). At Katia Campbell's urging, I designed Our Friendship Story to follow the demographic survey.

6. At the same time, the survey respondents' reluctance to embrace such methods as the journal entry, photo share or visual representation (which they seemed to perceive as requiring a kind of effort and/or creativity that they weren't prepared to offer), prompted me to plan very carefully as I wrote the questions for Our Friendship Story. I intended that this project would be an enjoyable way to build trust and to offer a helpful structure for talking about the co-construction of a friendship. In order to accomplish these goals in a comfortable context, I needed to provide clear, detailed guidance to participants.[12]

Invitation to Participate and the Participant Group

Once this ethnographically-inflected, interview-based case study received approval from the Human Research Committee, I invited women to participate. I began with contacts that I had developed in my ethnographic exploration of metro Detroit. Most of my communication about the research was word of mouth: I explained that I was studying friendship between black and white women in metro Detroit, summarizing the steps of the research for any one who expressed interest. I also created and shared an invitational flyer for potential participants or contacts who might know potential participants (Appendix B). Some of my acquaintances in metro Detroit did

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[12]As the dissertation research proceeded, I also checked back with participants via email to be see if they had any questions or concerns about Our Friendship Story. For all three pairs, this phase of the research did prove to be the comfortable, friendship-affirming experienced I hoped it would be.

indeed distribute this flyer to friends, co-workers, etc. whom they thought might be interested in participating in the research.

As it turned out, my initial acquaintance with the three pairs of friends took place in three different ways. With Celia and Kate, I knew Celia first through her son's friendship with my son. Her son, "Michael," and my son, "Curtis,"[13] attended the same summer day camp (sponsored by our former church), starting in 2006 and continuing through 2008. Michael, who is five years older than Curtis, became a friend and mentor to my son, an especially important role in Curtis's life since at first, we had just moved from Denver, and later, my husband was absent from Curtis's life. Celia and I became friendly acquaintances through the friendship of our sons. When she heard about my research project, she wanted to participate and invited her friend Kate to join her.

Just as Celia and Kate finished the three stages of the research, I was beginning a friendship with another mom, this one from my son's Catholic school. We met through our mutual participation in required service hours, which we both chose to fulfill at the school's used book sale. This new friend knew a mom (from her twin daughters' grade) who might be a candidate for the research. So my new friend introduced me to Erica, who invited her friend Jynil to the study.

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[13]Curtis's pseudonym was chosen because of a little incident in front of the mirror. A few years ago, my son's favorite Detroit Tiger baseball player was Curtis Granderson, who is black. One day my son was gazing into the bathroom mirror and he asked, "Mom, I look just like Curtis Granderson, don't I? . . . Except for my white skin and my yellow hair, I look just like Curtis Granderson, don't I?"

The third pair of friends came to my attention through academic contacts. Dr. Todd Duncan of the English Department at Wayne State University in Detroit (who was my professor for the Detroit poetry course) and Dr. Monica White of the Sociology Department at Wayne State (and a member of the committee for this dissertation) were willing to post my invitational flyer on their departmental list serves. Their posts generated a number of inquiries, out of which I became acquainted with Candace, who invited her friend Jean to participate in the research. Thus a diversity of avenues of connection–including my acquaintance with two of the three black friends before meeting their white friends–is an important part of the research narrative of this study.

Diversity of any kind is welcome in order to balance the typically small size of a participant group in narrative inquiry. Josselson and Lieblich (2003) claim that in narrative inquiry, the greater the complexity of data, the smaller the number of participants should be for a single research project. In this study of black/white friendships in metro Detroit, the complexity of data is fairly significant, and so the participant group is relatively small. Chase (2005) cites several narrative studies that include just one or only a few participants, claiming that for narrative inquiry, the epistemology, methods, and analysis justify a small participant group. This dissertation-length study provided time and space to represent each of the three pairs of friends with a significant degree of attention to relational and discursive detail.

Of course, in some ways, the small size of the participant group limited what could be said about communicative co-construction of black/white women's friendships in metro Detroit. (This limitation and others will be discussed further in the Conclusion.) For example, all members of the group were socioeconomically middle-class, which is not surprising for at least three reasons:

1. The research design of the initial phases of the project (consent forms and Our Friendship Story) is text-intensive, requiring at least a high school literacy level.

2. Middle-class women are the ones that I was most likely to encounter in this ethnographically-inspired study, since I am a middle-class woman.

3. Middle-class women would be those most likely to have the resources (of discretionary time and income) to invest in friendships in this highly segregated, sprawling metro area without significant mass transit.

However, acknowledging the limited breadth of perspectives does not diminish the depth of data that three pairs of middle-class friends were able to offer.

<p style="text-align:center">Friendship Research</p>

Preliminary Demographic Questionnaire

The three friendship pairs who participated in this research began by completing a preliminary demographic questionnaire (Appendix C). This questionnaire provided basic information that helped me verify that they were appropriate candidates for this research. Participants needed to meet the following criteria:

–Individuals within a friendship dyad, one member of which identifies as black (or African American) and the other as white (or Caucasian or European American)

–Friends with a relationship that has lasted for at least two years,[14]

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[14]This characteristic and the last one (seeing each other in at least two contexts) were used by McCullough (1998) in her study of cross-race friends, the first in order to study established friendships (as I also intend to do), and the second in order to assure that the relationship would be a friendship as it is generally operationalized in this society (as opposed to workplace acquaintances, for instance).

–Residents of metro Detroit for at least ten years (reasoning that adults with at least a
decade of life experience here will have had a chance to imbibe the narratives of local history).

–Friends who see each other in at least two contexts.

–Friends whose personal definitions of friendship are compatible with the definition of
friendship for this research.

The personal definitions written by the friends on the preliminary demographic questionnaire do
indeed resonate with the definition for this research (see Chapter II and Appendix D).
Demographic information about the three dyads of friends who participated in the research, using
their self-identifications at the time of their research participation, may be seen in Table 4. 1-3.

Table 4.1: **Celia and Kate:** Friends for Approximately 16 Years

Friend	Age	Race/ Ethnicity	Years in Metro Detroit	Other Places of Residence	Occupation	Previous Occupations	Religious Identification
Celia	42	Black/ Jamaican	23	Kingston, Jamaica	Division Director at a human services agency	social services worker	United Church of Christ
Kate	39	White/ German-English-Scotch-Irish American	39	(39 years in Metro Detroit)	Stay-at-home-mom, Director of Lay Ministries, Mary Kay Consultant	Foster Care, Adoption Worker, Foster Care Supervisor	Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Table 4. 2: **Erica and Jynil:** Friends for Approximately 7 ½ Years

Erica	37	African American	14	Flint, MI, Chicago, IL, Columbia, SC	Health System Administrator	Fund Development Director, Volunteer Manager	Muslim
Jynil	38	Caucasian	26	Knoxville, TN	Executive Director for a Nonprofit	Waitress, Customer Service Rep, Bank Teller	Catholic

Table 4. 3: **Jean and Candace:** Friends for Approximately 7 Years

Jean	61	Black	most of my life	Pasadena, California	Graduate Research Assistant	Marketing Professional/ Technical Instructor (Domestic and International)	Agnostic
Candace	58	White	most of my life	Naples, FL	College Instructor	Marketing Professional	Raised Catholic / Nonreligious

Consent form meetings, which followed the participants' completion of the demographic questionnaire, averaged one hour. On the consent forms, all of the participants were offered the option to have their real first names used and to offer a photo for publication. All participants chose to have real first names and photos included.

As I have discussed, although the participant group is not large or socioeconomically diverse, the questionnaire responses reveal additional diversity (besides the methods of acquaintance detailed earlier) that provide interesting contrapuntal perspectives within the participant group (see Tables 4. 1-3). For example, each member of the group has long-term experience in metro Detroit (at least 14 years, clearly making me the neophyte), but the experience is varied. Some friends live in exurban areas (Kate and Jynil). Candace lives in an outer-ring suburb, though as a child she lived in Detroit. Jean lives in Detroit, though she spent several years in California. Both Candace and Jean consider themselves to be "native Detroiters." Both Celia and Erica, on the other hand, grew up elsewhere (Celia in Jamaica and Erica in Flint, MI). Both also lived in Detroit at one time, though now they reside in inner-ring suburbs. All three pairs of friends happen to mirror the general demographic picture of Detroit, where blacks

predominantly live in the city or inner-ring suburbs, while whites predominantly live in the

suburbs or exurban areas.

The friends also represent a fairly wide range of former and current work experience,

including such diverse careers as stay-at-home mom, restaurant server, grad school research

assistant, non-profit supervisor, and marketing specialist (see Table 4.1-3). The life stages of the

three pairs also provided an interesting variety of perspectives on friendship and on metro Detroit.

Erica and Jynil are in their thirties, in a stage when their children are young and their ascending

careers are demanding. They haven't lived through nearly as much of the racially contentious

Detroit history as Jean and Candace have. Celia and Kate are not much older than Erica and

Jynil, but since their children are older, the friends are experiencing a different stage of personal,

family and community concerns than either Erica and Jynil or Candace and Jean (the children and

step-children of the oldest pair are adults who have children of their own). The religious

affiliations of the friends (which arose out of interview conversations rather than out of the

preliminary questionnaire) included two Protestant Christians from different mainline

denominations, one Catholic, one Muslim, an agnostic, and one friend who is nonreligious.

A Project for Friends: Our Friendship Story

Following from the work of Baxter and West (2003), who asked friendship and marriage

partners to answer questions about their relationship without the presence of a researcher, and a

number of narrative analysts (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998; McAdams 1985, 1993,

2006; Scarf, 1981), who use various formulations of the analogy of a book in order to interview

individuals about their life histories, I developed a research method that I call "Our Friendship

Story" (Appendix D). After the friends' completion of the demographic questionnaire and our appointment to get acquainted and sign consent forms, I requested that the friends meet at a location of their choice in order to complete Our Friendship Story. All three pairs chose restaurant or coffee shop settings for their Friendship Story conversations. Total time for Our Friendship Story conversations was approximately two to five hours per pair (the friends that met for five hours chose to meet over lunch twice). Included in the Friendship Story packet was a postage-paid envelope addressed to me, which participants used to return one copy of their responses.

Our Friendship Story proved to be both a challenging and fruitful research method. Challenging for the friends, at least partly because it invited them into metadiscourse that may have been an unaccustomed communicative practice. Challenging for me, because the responses I received were sometimes cryptic. I needed to read between the lines and ask the friends to help me fill in the gaps. Our Friendship Story was also fruitful for all. The friends all testified to the enjoyable, insightful conversations that it elicited. For me as researcher, I had full enough responses so that I could tailor the interview protocols to the experiences of the friends, and I felt invited into conversations that had already begun. So that readers can see more clearly how we proceeded, I have compiled the friends' responses to Our Friendship Story as Appendix F.

The Three-person Interview

Using the responses from Our Friendship Story to shape the interview protocol (Attached as Appendix G), I met with each pair of friends over lunch (more than an hour to two and a half hours). All three pairs chose lunch as the time of day for these interviews (I assumed because

they enjoy meeting over lunch and this was an available time slot for all of us). Celia and Kate

chose to meet with me in a quiet room at Celia's church after the Wednesday noon service (which

we all attended). Celia picked up take-out for lunch. Erica and Jynil chose a Mexican restaurant

that they liked (and with a location that was fairly convenient for both of their workplaces). By

mutual agreement, Candace, Jean and I met at a Detroit Midtown restaurant close to where

Candace lives (and since I know the owners of this particular restaurant, we enjoyed the setting

of a private dining room).   (Interestingly, all three restaurant locations were in Detroit, even

though the work places and homes of the friends are not all located within the city limits.) I

recorded and transcribed the interviews.

Follow-through Interview/Discussion

After the three-person interviews, I began my process of analysis and interpretation by

such methods as writing field notes, writing scratch notes while listening to the recordings, and

allowing participant responses of the first interviews to shape the protocols for the follow-through

interviews (the generic text of which may be found in Appendix H).   After a kind of "simmering"

process, (of at least eight days and at most five weeks), each pair of friends and I met for a

follow-through interview/discussion, during which I invited the friends to participate in my

process of analysis and interpretation.[15] Specific goals of the follow-through interviews included:

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[15]In the research proposal (1/08), this final participant stage of the research was to be an individual follow-through (by email, conventional mail, phone or in person–participant's choice). However, in consultation with my dissertation advisor, I revised this stage of the design, turning it into a second three-person interview. This decision was based on two considerations: 1. Since the research question asks about co-construction of relationships, a focus on individual perceptions did not seem appropriate as "the last word" from the friends. 2. Interpersonally, I did not want to run the risk of placing either the friends or myself in a

member-checking of researcher's interpretations,

reflecting upon the risks and benefits of the research process,

reflecting upon their friendship (now that it has become an "object of study"), and

providing closure to the research.

These interview/discussions–again, over lunch–ran over an hour to nearly two hours. Again, I

recorded and transcribed these follow-through interviews.

Methods of Narrative Analysis

Guiding Principles

There are many ways of reading any text; we choose a particular strategy because it lets us see what matters to us. (Ochburg, 2003, p. 116)

First, I will outline the basic commitments of the methodology for this research. These

commitments, both epistemological and philosophical, arise out of respect for the integrity of the

narrative data, the growing tradition of narrative inquiry, and my identity as a feminist qualitative

researcher. Following from a statement of guiding principles, I will explain how those principles

translated into the specific methods of analysis that I chose for this research.

My basic orientation toward narrative inquiry privileges the narrative unit of discourse

considered whole, not coded according to content and reorganized into thematic categories. This

orientation stands outside of the traditional coding and classification method that is typical of

qualitative research, a method which is labeled content-categorical by Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach,

and Zilber (1998). Instead, when I employed any method of coding and classification, it stood

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discomfiting position as the sharers or bearer of individual confidences (which might possibly
reflect negatively on the absent friend).

within the logic of the narrative sequence of the friends' relational stories and the narratives within those stories. I attempted to situate any analytic claim within the narrative framework that the friends co-constructed.

In my commitment to analyzing narrative data holistically, I resonate with the experiences of Riessman (1993) and Chase (2005), who attempted to impose thematic categories upon participant narratives. The material itself seemed to resist the splicing and coding processes that thematic analysis requires. Like Riessman, I chose methods of analysis that preserved the "coherence and sequence" (p. vi) of the original storytellers, methods that revealed "how a narrative is constructed and how a teller rhetorically creates it to make particular points" (p. vii). With Chase, I defined my task as the work of listening, not just in the moment of interaction with the friends, but listening also to the recordings and transcripts afterward–listening to narratives as whole entities with composite parts, hearing the voices of participants as each develops a "narrative strategy" (p. 29).

In my commitment to analyze narratives as holistically as possible, the orientation of narrative rhetorical criticism was helpful. I focused on how a narrative plot line "reveals something important about an individual's identity," or how it gives insight into a culture–for example, "the meanings attributed to particular events, the aspects of the culture that are privileged and repressed, and the values of a culture" (Foss, 2004, p. 339).

A holistic analysis of narratives is reflective of a holistic narrative epistemology. As Riessman (2008) claims, narrative researchers can learn from the content of the discourse, the form of the discourse, and the interactive setting for the discourse. I committed myself to learn

from all three, and the analysis reflects that commitment. Although one kind of narrative knowing or another comes to the fore at various moments of the analysis, I attempted a kind of synthesis, following from Lieblich et al. (1998), who write,

> Synthesis between form analysis and content analysis can prove very fruitful. Form analysis requires the researcher to engage in definition of criteria, classifications, and examination of the deep structures of a text, while consideration of these categories in terms of content often highlights dimensions and distinctions that would not have arisen from purely structural analysis. (p. 163)

Structural analysis in this project was guided primarily by an application of Labov's narrative grammar (Labov & Waletzkey, 1967; Labov, 1972, 1981), content analysis took place as I listened for the meaning-making of the friends throughout, and I offer analysis of the interactive context (both the research process and the social setting of metro Detroit) whenever possible.

As rhetorical, interpretive analysis, my orientation is similar to that of Carrillo Rowe (2008), who explains that her approach to a study of transracial feminist alliances is less about identifying the "truth" about the practices within such relationships and more about the "self-stagings–representations of self and other in community" (p. 19) that she encountered in the interview performances and narratives of her participants. In this case study, the participants are not only engaging in "self-staging," but relationship staging. They are performing as relational partners who have "come to share a face" (Goffman, 1967, p. 42) that they are co-constructing in the interactive moment.

As shared face, I recognized that participants' performances would be crafted to create a desired impression. As a researcher, I might have undertaken the critical role of deconstructing participant performances in order to tease out their inconsistencies and analyze their fault lines. However, as a feminist and a participant observer in metro Detroit, I chose instead to represent the performances as fully as possible, situate them within their social contexts, and interpret how and why they work. I concur with Finch (1984), who writes that a feminist researcher will be "'on the side' of the women she studies" (p. 85).

Besides acknowledging that the analysis, by design, was not performed by an observer who attempted to gain an "objective" perspective on the friendships, I also acknowledge that I privileged the sense-making of the participants in my analysis. In their research with young women, one of Brown and Gilligan's (1992) primary goals was to hear how a girl "speaks of herself before we speak of her" (p. 28). In this case study, I listened as closely as possible for how the friends spoke of themselves and what discursive practices seemed "native" to their "relational culture" (Wood, 1982). I held in abeyance my conclusions about what the friends valued or what discourse strategies seemed to work best for them. Even now, I recognize that my "final" interpretations are incomplete, tentative–a snapshot in time.

At the same time, though the analysis begins with the friends' own meaning-making, it does not end there. My own academic experience and knowledge–within areas such as narrative inquiry, communication theory, the history of Detroit, race, and identity–have, by necessity, rendered the analysis my own. However, I view that analysis as an extension of the friends' own meaning-making rather than as a departure from it.

Feminism compelled me to yet another guiding principle. I approached both research and analysis in a relational manner. Carrillo Rowe (2008) writes that in order to "render visible" the "relational *practices* conducive to transracial feminist alliances" among her participants, a "relational approach to the politics of speaking and listening" (p. 12, italics in original) is needed. My "relational approach" included a conversational interview style, in which I offered self-disclosures of my own story when I deemed they were appropriate. During analysis I returned to participants in order to update them on progress, check interpretations, ask if a certain narrative might be told in a specific way, and determine their preferred methods for securing third party privacy. In short, though I was the one performing the analysis, I attempted to complete this process in relationship with the participants. Their voices kept me company during transcription, and their emails, phone calls, and photos were present in my office as I pondered possible analytic angles on their narratives. Though the participants did not all become my friends, I approached both the research and the analysis as Tillmann-Healy (2003) advocates; I viewed the participants "as . . . potential or actual friends: with a desire for mutual respect, understanding, examination, and growth" (p. 746). Furthermore, the intersubjectivity of the research process should not be limited to the participants and researcher. Readers of this dissertation are invited to participate in additional layers of interaction and interpretation.

Before proceeding to detail the ways in which principles met praxis in the actual process of analysis, I must underscore my commitment to this research as *communication* research. Though the knowledge claims of this analysis are my interpretations based on my perceptions, they are grounded in the interactive experience of the research process, and they focus on the

interaction of the friends. Therefore, for each friendship pair, I will highlight a few communicative practices that I perceive to be "provisions of friendship" (Rawlins, 1992, p. 230) that seem significant to the relational health of the friends–perhaps provisions that contribute to a successful, long-term friendship across a racial divide. Although my knowledge of the relational practices of the friends is limited, I will describe practices that I saw and heard repeatedly in co-constructions that seemed beneficial to the friendships. I will assume, with many others (e.g., Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Finch, 1984; Gergen & Davis, 2003; Greenspan, 2003; Labov, 1981; Linde, 1993; Löyttyniemi, 2001; McAdams, 2006; McAdams & Bowman, 2001; Ochburg & Comeau, 2001, Riessman, 1990; Singer, 2001; Tillmann-Healy, 2003), that the discursive practices in an interview context are similar enough to those of naturally occurring interaction so that claims about relational practices and identity work, for example, are possible.

Tracy (2002) and Montgomery and Baxter (1998) demonstrate how everyday talk does identity and relational work. As a communication researcher, I committed myself to learning something about how the talk of the friends co-constructs identity, both individual and relational. Singer (2001)writes,

> I have argued that the life stories we tell to portray our lives to others and ourselves serve a functional purpose. They provide a conscious record to us at critical junctures in our lives about our capacity for relationships and constructive action in the world. They express our most salient self-images, and help us to reconcile these images into a coherent

sense of identity. They let us see how our story connects to larger familial and societal

stories, clarifying the legacy we might offer to others. (p. 276)

As I listened to the friendship narratives of "critical junctures" in relational history, I attempted to

identify strands of identity work and how they may tie to larger social constructs and contexts.

In doing so, I continued the legacy of scholars who have attempted this kind of identity work not

just for individuals, but within the context of relational histories (Baxter & West, 2003; Kellas,

2005; McCullough, 1998; Miller-Day, 2004; Veroff, Sutherland, Chadiha, & Ortega, 1993). I

also attempted to join the smaller conversation that foregrounds *interaction* among relational

partners in qualitative studies (e.g., Miller-Day, 2004; Rawlins, 1998; Waldron & Kelley, 2008).

As communication research that foregrounds interaction, the audience and third

participant in the interaction–the researcher–needs to be included in the analysis. I admit that I

resisted this analytic turn, intending that the research claims would center upon the discursive co-

constructions of the friends. "It's not about me, it's about *them*," was the recurring mental

mantra. Yet, I respect the claim of many scholars–that analysis must give greater attention to the

interactive moment and relationship (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000;

Gergen & Davis, 2003; Greenspan, 2003; Linde, 1993; Löyttyniemi, 2001; McAdams, 2006;

Nair, 2003; Riessman, 1993; Worthham, 2001). Since the interactive context of the interviews

included me, and the narratives as the friends co-constructed them were set in the context of the

research relationship, I have included my own role in interaction in the analysis when my role

somehow seemed significant to the narrative grammar or the construction and performance of

identity. Even beyond the moment of interaction, my own perceptions ground the analysis, and

so at the very least, a degree of transparent researcher reflexivity is imperative. Finally, heeding a

call by Chase (2005), following from Denzin and Lincoln (2000), I recognized myself as a

narrator of the research journey as I developed interpretations and forms of representation for the

stories and narratives of the friends.

Application of the Guiding Principles to Analysis

"Understanding the form and pressure of . . . natives' inner lives is more like grasping a proverb, catching an allusion, seeing a joke–or, as I have suggested, reading a poem–than it is like achieving communion." (Geertz, 1983, qutd. in Linde, 1993, p. 50)

Since this research is committed to the narrative paradigm–including narrative

epistemology, narrative as unit of analysis, and narrative as method (in that the research was

performed at the intersection of my story with the story of participants), finding appropriate forms

of narrative representation became my quest in the process of analysis as well.   As Clandinin and

Connnelly (2000) write, I needed to locate ways to present "storied lives in storied ways" (p.

141).

Analysis Featuring the Friendships (Chapters V-VII)

Given limitations of scope and space, I was not able to represent the complete stories of

the friends as I came to know them, nor could I present the many narratives that I heard within the

context of those stories. Although I offered as complete a portrayal of the friends as

possible–partly by quoting extensively from transcripts–selection was necessary. I have

attempted to make representative selections, based upon what I came to know about the

relationships of the friends and upon the commitments I have outlined above. The chapters that

feature each friendship (5-7) begin with a lengthy quotation that I determined would represent

important features of the friends' discursive style and their relationship. Just as the research process began with Our Friendship Story, which privileged the agency and voices of the friends at the outset of narrative inquiry, so also the voices of the friends may be "heard" at the outset of each chapter of analysis.

Aspects of these framing quotations are interpreted as each chapter proceeds. Other features of the discourse in the framing quotations are left without comment, open for readers to interpret if they wish. The chapters continue with a selection of the discourse practices of the friends–certain communicatively co-constructed "provisions of friendship" (Rawlins, 1992, p. 230). I provide representative quotations to illustrate each provision and commentary that is intended to situate these practices within the story of the relationships.

Finally, the bulk of each chapter on the friendships is taken up with an entire featured narrative, quoted from the transcripts in its entirety (based on the definition of narrative provided in the narrative chapter). The featured narratives are the most obvious, primary way that this research privileges narrative data. As intact narratives, I offer interpretations on the levels of structure, content, and interactive context, and readers are welcome to do the same.

I chose these narratives based on several criteria:

1. Each one is a narrative that the friends chose in the Our Friendship Story (rather than a narrative that arose spontaneously out of the interview process but was not mentioned in OFS). This category of narrative, I determined, would be more pivotal to the friends' own sense of their history, agency, and co-constructed relational face.

2. Each narrative is one that the friends seemed to find compelling (via such indicators as level of detail, degree of co-construction, nonverbal engagement, emotional affect).

3. Each narrative is one that *I* found compelling (it has at least one highly "reportable event" (Labov, 1981)).

4. Each narrative has all or most of the elements of "full narrative structure" (Labov & Waletzky, 1967, p. 32), though not necessarily in the prototypical order.

5. Each narrative illustrates something that I found was important about the friendship, identity work, and the ways that they/we co-narrated in interaction.

Once I chose the featured narratives for each friendship, I needed to choose a method of representing the transcripts. Again, the guiding principle of a holistic approach to analysis was important. I wanted to present the complete narratives without omissions of text or even deletions of disfluencies (such as repeated words or "um"), knowing that disfluencies are often traces of relational and/or emotional fault lines. The soft backchanneling (e.g., "mmhmm") needed to be represented, recognizing that it might be important to interpretations of our roles in co-constructing narrative. However, the sheer volume of verbiage and the technical conventions of transcription that surround the bulky text of a relatively long narrative can be an obstacle to a reader's apprehension of the meaning-making of the friends. Certainly even to me, the researcher involved in interaction and the transcriber of all the material, the raw narrative text was a barrier to interpretation.

Fortunately, narrative inquiry provides exemplars of transcription of entire narratives that create windows into the meaning-making of the speakers. In Riessman's (1990) work with

divorce narratives, she divides the transcript into clauses and stanzas (following Gee, 1985, 1986, 1991), allowing her to see the poetic structures that build the story and highlight the participant's own sense-making and communication of that sense-making. Her transcription reduces the length of a long narrative, "parsing it according to a set of rules into lines, stanzas, and parts, examining its organizing metaphors, and creating a schematic to display the structure" (Riessman, 1993, p. 50). Riessman then analyzes the narratives in this visual form that makes their deep structure more evident. Labov (Labov & Waletzky, 1967; Labov, 1981) divides entire narrative transcripts into grammatical clauses in order to illuminate how the clauses serve the functions of narrative grammar and to highlight such features as how skilled storytellers integrate evaluation–the "point" of the story–into the narrative.

Among these exemplars and others, I chose to emulate most closely Labov's (Labov & Waletzky, 1967; Labov, 1981) transcription into clauses. Since I chose to analyze the narratives using a modified version of his holistic structural analysis (see below), this kind of representation is consistent with and conducive to that analysis. Setting clauses off in this way breaks the text into units of meaning, which assists interpreters in glimpsing the meaning-making of the friends. In terms of the clauses, I followed these guidelines:

1. Each flush-left line begins a new independent clause or nonrestrictive dependent clause. (Of course, if a conversational turn is a smaller linguistic unit than a clause, it is not omitted but given its own line.)

2. If a clause is long, it indents on the next line(s).

3. If a clause is repeated, it continues on the same line rather than starting a new one.

4. Interjections like "you know" are not treated as independent clauses, but kept with the

clauses on which they seem to comment.

I find that the representation of narratives in transcribed grammatical clauses gives a helpful

shape to the discourse. In addition to opening an interpretive window using units of meaning, the

transcription slows down the text, almost as though the friends themselves were slowing their

often fast-paced interaction, allowing readers–who also may be slowed by this method of

representing transcription–to see more easily what the discourse is doing.

Another unique feature of the transcription is color, which I have used not only for the

featured narratives, but for all of the longer (blocked) quotations. I have employed color for

reasons that are, again, grounded in the guiding principles of this research. Color is one way to

highlight the various interactive and narrative contributions of the three (or more, when servers at

restaurants contribute) speakers. It more graphically displays the balance of talk and

simultaneous speech (e.g., when the friends speak together, the text is purple, since red and blue

are blended). Furthermore, the use of color gives readers access to the kind of knowledge that I

as a researcher experienced throughout: I always knew which friend was black and which was

white. So that readers also are privy to this information, in all of the longer transcript

representations, the black friend's words are typed in blue and the white friend's in red. My own

contributions to the discourse are typed in green.[16]

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[16]Additional notes intended to assist readers of the transcripts may be found in Appendix
I.

As I have said, an adaptation of Labov's (Labov & Waletzky, 1967; Labov, 1972, 1981) narrative grammar has provided the basic schema for analysis of the friendship narratives. His grammar offers a holistic approach to analysis that opens interpretations on both the structural and referential levels of narrative discourse. Furthermore, in my commitment to study interaction, I take seriously Nair's (2003) claim that claim that Labov's narrative grammar should be applied with much more attention to intersubjectivity than is typically given by analysts. She states that when listeners are considered as potential co-constructors of the narrative rather than simply receivers of the discourse, "the story begins to emerge not just as a teller's show but rather as a joint production by narrators(s) and listener(s), speaker(s) and hearer(s)" (p. 32). Nair's conceptualization of narrative honors both the ABAB turn-taking of conversation and the ABCD of a plot line. When I employed her conceptualization of narrative interaction, I found that important points of interpretation became clear through the lens of Labovian narrative grammar when it was focused on the contributions of listeners as well as primary narrators.

In the analysis chapters, I often refer to the Labovian narrative elements of abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution, and coda. When I do so, I am, for the most part, using Labov's original definitions of these terms (which are given in the narrative chapter of this text). I need to explain nuances of difference, however, that arose from this particular data set. Complicating action (consisting of "narrative clauses") is, in my usage, a series of events that escalates the interest in characters and what they do, say, or what happens to them. However, I did not find that all narrative clauses in this data set needed to be in the precise sequence that the friends offered in order to maintain the referential integrity of the narrative.

Furthermore, in some narratives I noted a moment of complicating action that I refer to as a "turning point," a common literary term that indicates a moment with the action offers a clear indication of how the resolution will be valenced. Differentiating a turning point is typically helpful in understanding "the point" of the story that narrators make in the evaluation. In addition, I found that the friends offered global commentary about their narratives, e.g., "it was fantastic," or "it was fun." The fact that they often repeated these assessments (in the same or similar words) and that they are often stated by both friends heightened the potential importance of such assessments, even though they do not fit neatly into the Labovian schema. They are not "the result" of the action (the resolution), and they are not a clear evaluation of what the story is really about. They tell *what* the narrator thinks and/or feels, but not *why*. I determined that such global comments referred to a general sense of how things turned out in the narrative, and as such, I categorized them as "assessments of the resolution." Finally, unlike typical Labovian analysis, I found that a single narrative might be making more than one "point"; therefore I included more than one evaluation in the analysis if that is what the friends seem to have intended.

As a guide to analysis, each chapter about the friends includes one or more tables following the featured narrative. In these tables I provide quotes and synopses that reveal how the narrative grammar functions in the narrative as a whole. I chose the elements of narrative grammar for these tables based on which elements I determined contributed the most to the basic skeleton of the narrative and to the point(s) that it eventually makes. Thus the abstract, complicating action/turning point, resolution (sometimes including assessments of the resolution)

and evaluation of the narrative are visualized on the tables. Evaluation is seen last (to the far

right), even though it does not always occur last in a narrative (indeed, in the prototypical

narrative in Labov's analyses, evaluation occurs just before the resolution). I placed evaluation in

the final column of the tables, however, since it offers the narrators' sense of why this is an

important story. The evaluation typically provides the clearest sense of the individual and/or

relational identity work performed by the co-narration. It is the narrators' own analysis, if you

will, and so it visually concludes the tables that highlight elements of narrative grammar.

I also need to provide an explanation for the choices of narrative strands that I have

provided on the tables, since each featured narrative includes a different set of narrative strands.

In every case, I have included the basic plot of the featured narrative itself, with additional strands

suggested by the data. If, for instance, Detroit as a setting for the featured narrative seems to be

offering its own simultaneous narrative, I included it on the table. If, on the other hand, Detroit as

a setting did not seem to provide a parallel narrative (or only arose as a coda, for instance), then I

did not include it on the tables. The narrative strands provided on the tables were those that

seemed to arise as full narratives (in Labovian terms) or close to full narratives. If elements of

narrative grammar were partially present but not fully formed into a narrative strand, I typically

commented on those incomplete strands, even though they were not as fully interwoven into the

featured narrative of the friends and therefore not included on the tables.

Analysis of the Narratives of the Friends Within the Metanarrative of Detroit

Continuing with a holistic approach to narrative in Chapter VIII, which considers the

friendship stories and narratives within the setting of metro Detroit, I turned again to William

Labov's contributions to narrative theory and analysis, this time to his research on conversations

that end in violence (1981) and therapeutic conversations (Labov & Fanshel, 1977). This

research relies on a "rule of requests," [17](credited by Labov to Goffman in a class taught by the

latter scholar), which runs as follows:

If A addresses to B an imperative specifying an action X at a time T, and A believes that

(conditions based on needs and abilities)
X should be done,

B has the ability to do X,

(conditions based on rights and obligations)
B has the obligation to do X, and

A has the right to tell B to do X

then A is heard as making a valid request for action X. (1981, p. 233)

The request (X) from conversation partner A to conversation partner B might be a request for

"action, information, confirmation, attention, or approval." Subcategories include "*mitigated*

requests" such as "petitions, pleas, and suggestions" and "*unmitigated* or *aggravated* requests,"

such as "orders, commands, and demands" (1977, p. 63; italics in the original).

These negotiations are higher stakes affairs when *challenges* are involved, since they are

often direct face attacks. Challenges, according to Labov (1977), may be "criticisms, attacks,

denigrations, insults" that, "if true, would lower the status of the other person" (p. 64). A variety

of responses are open to the conversation partner who is challenged. He or she may "*defend*"

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[17]Labov (1981) credits Erving Goffman for his thinking on requests and challenges, based on a class that Goffman taught (p. 246). Indeed, Goffman describes a similar series of interactional moves in *Interaction Ritual* (1967).

him/herself, "*admit* the challenge to be valid and suffer the consequence of accepting lower status," or "break off verbal interaction in a huff." Other possibilities for response include retreating from, mitigating, or aggravating a challenge (Labov, 1977, pp. 64-65; italics in the original). Although Labov does not deal with the opposite kind of "challenge" in great detail, he says that positive conversational challenges include "praise, support, flattery, reinforcement" (1977, p. 64), which elevate the esteem of the conversation partner and reinforce "that person's right to hold a given status" (1981, p. 242).

I analyze requests and challenges using Labovian terms, attending to the deeper structure of the featured narratives of the friends, rather than the surface structure of the transcripts. My intention in this deeper analysis is to reach a level of interpretation in these narratives that Labov (1981) calls "the more abstract level of interaction where status and role are negotiated" (p. 242).

Following this analysis of the deeper structure of the featured narratives in terms of requests and challenges, I turn to a level of analysis that seems, at first, to be a departure from the empirical data. However, I intend that this analysis will extend the reach of the empirical rather than depart from it. I draw on the work of Gordon (2008) and others, who have attempted to understand how oppressions of the past–like slavery–are not really over. In what Gordon calls "a greatly expanded impression of the empirical" (p. 204), she advocates the view of a "sociological imagination" to recognize how the hauntings of the past exercise power over the daily interaction of the present. Gordon is not alone in pointing out the power of the past on the present. Frankenburg (1993) writes that "[t]he white subject and the white imaginary . . . by no means confine themselves to the present in their construction, but rather draw, consciously and

unconsciously, on moments in the racial order long past in material terms" (p. 240). Heath

(1983), who studied three speech communities in the Piedmont Carolinas, states that these

communities

> are products of the region's history which determined the times, places, and ways they
>
> could interact. Historians who have studied the Piedmont Carolinas since the colonial
>
> period tell of the relations among these groups and of the economic forces and political
>
> events which provide the legacy of ideas, values, and actions these groups bear today. (p.
>
> 9)

Such a "legacy of ideas, values, and actions" may be so taken for granted that it becomes what

Linde (1993) calls the "common sense" of a culture, i.e., a culture's highest order belief system

that seems so natural that it provides the script for what "any reasonable person would believe or

feel or do in a given circumstance" (p. 194). Insiders in a culture find it almost impossible to

articulate this kind of common sense, and so it may be read by researchers only in silence, only in

what participants *cannot* say.

Gordon's (2008) significant contribution to this discussion within social science is to offer

literary case studies that illustrate the shape and voice of what cannot be spoken. Gordon says

that the legacy of the past visits us and lives with us as a *ghost.* A ghost, unlike trauma, always

requires a "something-to-be-done" (p. xvi).   Scholars of social life and participants in a social

location may be afraid of such ghosts, but ultimately, says Gordon, we must reckon with them.

She writes, "Haunting is a part of our social world, and understanding it is essential to grasping

the nature of our society and for changing it" (p. 27).

Gordon (2008) reads Toni Morrison's *Beloved* as a case study and as a palimpsest (a multi-vocal text, described more fully in Chapter VIII) that illustrates the challenges and reckonings with which our society must grapple in order to find freedom from an oppressive past. She claims that we must not "remain haunted," for to do so "is to remain partial to the dead or the deadly and not to the living" (p. 182). Gordon says that Morrison offers "a stunning example of how to hospitably and delicately talk to ghosts and through hauntings, which we must do" (p. 182). However, she claims that we must do more than talk. As individuals, we need to reckon with ghosts and join with others in a kind of "collective exorcism" (p. 183) that eventually dismisses the ghost.

How this plays out in daily interaction seems mysterious indeed, but I will offer my own version of the palimpsest that illustrates how the friends in metro Detroit may be talking to the ghost (whose voice may be heard in the metanarrative of this social location). Certainly a mere three pairs of friends with their stories and narratives are not exorcizing the ghost of an entire social landscape, but they *are* talking back to it.

V. CELIA AND KATE

Celia (L) and Kate (photo provided by the friends)

Marcia: Detroit is known as one of the most segregated areas in the whole nation, and so your friendship is unusual anywhere, but it may be especially unusual around here, and, um, do you have any thoughts on why people stay apart so much? Why there aren't more friendships like yours. . . .

Kate: Well, . . . like, I know, growing up, you know, this side of 15 Mile was black and the other side, I mean, it was firmly divided by a road [M: mmhmm], and the twixt didn't really, you know, you went to school together but that was about it, and it wasn't, for me it wasn't conscious, it, it was geographical [M: OK] . . . .
       And I was blessed to pick a profession that took me out of that zone [M: sure], and brought me into the city, and to have other experiences and, . . . I embraced that [M: mmhmm], 'cause to me, it, it was kind of a coming home of sorts. I don't know, I just always felt comfortable and welcomed and included. One of my foster parents said to me, [*imitating the parent's high pitch*] "You might be white sugar on the outside, but you're brown sugar on the inside." Like, OK, what does that mean? . . . I just was always, "This is who I am," so, I don't know. You know, how some people go through life as a woman and think they should be a man? . . . Sometimes I think I'm white and maybe I was supposed to be black! [*laughing*; M: *laughter*] I don't know! But I don't always feel comfortable with my own kind! . . . Does that sound totally crazy?

Celia: It does, but I know what you mean, but, um, I guess part of what I think leads there to not be as many interracial friendships does have to do with the demographics of the city, the, the logistics, you know, the sprawl and maybe, I mean, it's, it's some pretty deep dynamics, I think, that set this up? [M: mmhmm] Um, and it does take some effort to see the other race, you know, like, like Kate was saying, ... I mean, Detroit tends to be majority black, right? And, . . . in general people don't necessarily move out of their comfort zone [M: sure], um, so it does take some amount of effort to find some one of a different race or nationality in general [M: yes]. . . .
       I don't know, . . . I never did see her as this white girl, you know, I just saw her as a person . . . . [W]hen I thought about her I didn't think "the white girl" [M: mmhmm, mmhmm], um, I just thought about a person who seems like she could be pretty nice to get to know, um, a person who seems like she'd be a heck of person if she'd just let herself go . . . . [I]t wasn't, it wasn't a race thing, and then after we got to know each other, in some ways, like, I found myself thinking this, though, Katie, that "I wonder if people see us as this white girl and this black girl?" I found myself thinking, like, "Are

people, when they see us, do they wonder that stuff, you know, but right behind that I found myself thinking, "Who the hell cares?" [M: mmhhm] "Who cares what people think?" You know, and, and that's kind of how it's been for me, you know, trying to maintain this, this interracial friendship. . . . . [W]hen, ah, we think about things like . . . events here at church . . . I never hesitate to call . . . because I'm thinkin', "OK, I won't invite 'em, 'cause it's an all-black event."
(Interview #2, ll. 384-387, 391, 393-413, 416-418, 420-421, 428-441)

Introduction

Celia and Kate have been friends for nearly two decades, and they are at ease with each other. They give each other time and space to think. Long turns at talk, like those above, were common in our conversations. They characteristically speak in calm, unhurried tones of medium-soft volume. They ponder things together, and their "thinking out loud" is punctuated by outbursts of laughter. I found that listening in their presence was relaxing. The color of their friendship is soft and welcoming and sweet, like brown sugar.

Celia and Kate met in 1992 when they were hired within a week of one another as "baby social workers together" (Celia's phrase, Interview #1, l. 135) . Later, they worked together in another organization, both as supervisors. Now that they are no longer colleagues, they enjoy each other's company and conversation at restaurants and, most commonly, in one another's homes. They attend events at one another's churches (in fact, the first time that I saw Celia and Kate together was before this research began, when Kate's family was attending a big event at Celia's church: her son's confirmation and the annual African-American Passover service). The husbands in the families as well as Kate's two children and Celia's four have their own friendships, fostered by the relationship of the women. Although the family context is now central to the friendship, Celia and Kate occasionally find time to attend an event together, like the Detroit

Jazz Festival. They enjoy talking about religion and politics. They see themselves as Christian

sisters who hold one another accountable to the standards of their mutual faith.

Maintaining this long-term friendship has been complex relational work. The friends have

needed to span many changes in their professional worlds, personal roles, economic

circumstances, and family lives over the years. They have gone from working side by side as

social workers whose homes were also fairly close together in metro Detroit, to participating in

very different work roles with homes in disparate settings. Celia is now a division director at a

human services agency, while Kate is a stay-at-home mom and director of laypersons' ministries

at her church. They now live an hour away from each other–Celia in Davis Park,[18] an inner ring

suburb northeast of Detroit, and Kate in exurban Highburg, northwest of Detroit.

The friends call their distances of time and space "gaps," a term that they introduced to me

early in our first interview. They said that the process of answering the Our Friendship Story

questions gave them an opportunity to talk about their "gaps," a kind of metadiscourse that they

told me usually does not happen when they talk. Usually, says Celia in this comment including

reported speech, their conversation just passes lightly over the gaps:

> "Oh, well, there were gaps," and, [K: yup] you know, we just [K: moved on] picked up from
> wherever, [M: mmhmm] yeah, so we did talk about our gaps a little bit [in Our Friendship Story].
> (Interview #1, ll. 22-4)

The gaps have sometimes been long. At one point I asked, "So would you say there are whole

stretches of a year or almost a year or more than years when you didn't see much of each other?"

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[18]All of the participants in this study freely offered information about the particular
communities in which they live. However, to protect participant privacy, the names of smaller
communities outside of Detroit have been changed.

(Interview #1, ll. 89-90), and the friends both agreed that some of their gaps had indeed been that

long. And yet, Celia and Kate are very close friends.

<div align="center">Communicative Co-Construction of Friendship</div>

<div align="center">*Consensus Building*</div>

Several communicatively co-constructed "provisions of friendship" (Rawlins, 1992, p.

230) probably contribute to the longevity and closeness of this relationship; some of these

provisions were evident in our interviews. One of these is their willingness to engage each other

in prolonged conversation that is dedicated to coming to consensus. Of all three pairs of friends,

Kate and Celia found the request (in Our Friendship Story) to divide the "book" of their friendship

into chapters most challenging. Partly that may be because of their "gaps," but also they seem to

engage regularly–and with at least some degree of pleasure–in ponderous co-construction of

decisions of mutual interest. The process of coming to consensus on the title of their "friendship

book" is an exemplar.   During our first interview, when I asked for some elaboration on the title, I

was expecting a short exchange, but here is how the discussion plays out:

Marcia: The title that you gave your story is, um, "Coming Apart, Getting Together," and maybe it's clear already, but anything else about why you chose that title?

Celia: I think we wanted to acknowledge the fact that we do move apart sometimes, um, but maybe we could add something like, um, I thought about adding some kind of faith statement, you know, to tie it together, but I just couldn't think of one at that moment.

Kate: Well, what's comin' to me is "Drawn Together, Coming Apart, Getting Together," [M: mm] 'cause we were drawn together [C: mmhmm].

Marcia: So the title would be "Drawn Together, Coming Apart, Getting Together"? [*light laughter*]

Kate: 'Cause it's gone from something that was wired in us, intervened with by life, to a choice to remain together. I think the "getting together" is statement to the perseverance that "getting" is an active [C: right, the, the active nature of it now, [M: mmhmm] yeah], but I really do think we both feel

like in the beginning there was some sorta draw that, like you said, it's kind of mystical or [M: mmhmm, yeah]

Celia: divine.

Kate: Divine, yeah.

Marcia: Wow. OK. So, um, "Drawn Together, Coming Apart, Getting Together [C: or something, that sounds like it] and there's a, there's a divine piece to that, especially in being "drawn" [C: mmhmm]. OK, um, well, I have so much to, um, to think about here that you've given me earlier and that you've given me today.

Celia: Maybe it's "Drawn Together, Staying Together" or "Drawn Together." And "Coming Apart" could be a chapter. [*sadly*:] Or a few chapters. Hmm. I like "Drawn Together." [*long pause*] "Drawn Together, Staying Together"?

Kate: No, because I think like you said, the apart piece is [C: significant] significant. [C: mmhmm]

Marcia: "Drawn [Together

Celia: [But the "Getting Together" piece is definitely significant, [M: OK] that's definitely big, too [M: OK].

Marcia: Yeah. I, I see a lot of "together" here [M & C: *laughter*]. Yup. And it sounds like, in some ways, although the coming apart isn't ideal, it sounds like there's, there's a certain richness that that brings [C: mmhmm], an appreciation when you do get back together and there's certain things that you gain when you're apart and then you bring them back to the relationship that somehow there's a, a benefit there? [K: mmhmm; C: mmhmm]   (Interview #1, ll. 616-651)

Here we see the friends ruminating over word choices, finishing each other's thoughts, agreeing,

disagreeing, and expressing their desire to weave a faith statement into their title. Accurately

naming the experience of their friendship is important to them, and they obviously perceive their

relational history as a complex one. I was ready to move along midway through the discussion

(when I told them they'd given me "much to . . . think about"), but they forged ahead with further

discussion of this topic. After this interview, I realized from the recording and my notes that this

topic seemed to engage their extended interest (and I also realized that I still wasn't sure what their

title was), so I asked them one more time about the title. Twenty additional lines of discussion

ensued. The title that Celia and Kate eventually settled on?–*Drawn Together, Coming Apart,*

Staying Together. The idea of being "drawn" indicated their sense of religious mysticism in their initial acquaintance and onward; "coming apart" acknowledged the gaps in time and space; and "staying together" expressed their continuing commitment to the friendship. These discussions about the title of their story indicate a kind of communicative perseverance about the "small stuff" that resonates on a larger scale; the way that the friends engage eagerly and successfully in this consensus-seeking interaction indicates that it may be a practice of communication that serves them well in many contexts.

Co-construction of a Counter-Cultural Script for Friendship

Kate and Celia seem to have a mutual affinity for co-constructing definitions. Even their gaps, rather than distancing them from each other, instead have led them to reshape their definition of friendship–and celebrate themselves for their ability to participate in the kind of friendship that they have redefined. Kate expresses their reshaping of the definition:

> [A] lot of people will talk about friends that are with you through thick and thin, and may have preconceived notions about what that is, and we talked about how, uh, you know, the losses that we've experienced since being friends, and a lot of other people tend to, when bad things happen are right there, but when you have to get back to life, . . . your life is still different, but everybody else goes back to how their life was 'cause it hasn't changed [M: right], and we weren't necessarily, quote-un-quote, "there for each other," um, at those times, but we were there for each other when everybody else had gone back to their [M: right] own life and [M: right] trying to pick up and adjusting to each other's new norm, not just trying to carry on like [M: mmhmm] we were unaffected. And, [M: yup] um, I think that has given me a new definition of "friends through thick and thin," so [M: mmhmm, mmhmm, yeah] . . . we . . . have always just picked up like we just saw each other yesterday, even though it's been, you know, there have been significant year gaps . . . .
> **(Interview #1, ll. 51-63)**

So a "friend through thick and thin"–which Celia and Kate do aspire to be–is not first of all some one who hustles over during the other friend's crisis but then soon expects the friend "to carry on like we were unaffected." The true friend may not be there during the first crush of loss, but walks

beside as a compassionate companion later, when others have gone back to their lives. During our

second interview, when I asked the friends to illustrate this definition, they described an important

incident that ended one of their "gaps":

Celia: [O]ne of those times when I think we felt it the most was when Joe's[19] [Kate's husband's] dad died, you know, and, . . . I don't know how we reconnected, you called us? . . . but it wasn't right away, it wasn't like . . . within that week, I think by the time you had called us, he was already buried . . . .

Kate: Yeah, I think it was that following Sunday [C: mmm], 'cause I remember sitting out in, um, the sunroom at his parents' house, and the first Sunday after he passed, we went back to go to church with his mom, so I think it was then [C: mmm], after that whole whirlwind of, of stuff, just it was kind of like, uh, "OK, here we are. Now what? [M: mmhmm] I oughta call Celia." So, that's what it was like for me, and I think at that point, wasn't your mom really in the thick of dealing with [an illness]? And I think it . . . wasn't, "Oh, why didn't she call me?" or . . . "[W]hy didn't you let me know this was going on?" Just, for me, it was a realizing how burdened I felt, and [M: mmhmm] just that kind of like a relief? Like, I can tell somebody how really feel? [M: mmhmm, oh yeah] Um, I don't have to pretend, I don't have to try and say the right thing, I can just say what I need to say [M: right] which was, you know, at that point it was a lot of anger . . . and I wasn't able to say that to anybody [M: sure], but I knew I could tell Celia that . . . .

Celia: . . . I remember though, you know, I've always been mad that people make her . . . feel guilty? [M: mmhmm] You know, that always makes me mad, [M: yup], you know, that people can, um, have that kind of impact on her. And so I, I remember when, you know, she called I knew, I mean, I'm never in it to try to make her feel guilty, you know, in this friendship, and never in it to be like, "OK, how come you didn't call?" [M: mmhmm, mmhmm] You know, I'm, I'm more into thinkin', "Well, ah, she didn't call because something else was going on, and that's OK, and I didn't call 'cause something else was going on, and . . . it's OK for her." You know, . . . and just because she didn't call didn't mean that we're any less of friends and, and that's OK, and [M: mmhmm] I remember just when she called [I] was thinkin', "OK, whadya need, and how ya doin' and how's everybody else," and, and that kinda stuff instead of the guilt trip thing. [M: mmhmm, yeah, yeah]

Kate: I mean, I guess I've come to realize about myself that when I'm in moments like that, I feel like it's almost like a holding my breath [M: mmhmm, mmhmm], that I'm just kinda holding it all in and holding it together, and I don't realize that I'm not breathing [M: mmhmm] until [M: yup], you know, in that situation talking to Celia or hugging my husband or that's when I feel, "OK, like I can let go," and I never realize that I'm walking through life with my shoulders all hunched up and my arms crossed and, you know, it's not a conscious thing . . . and . . . I think it's almost like, "OK, I'm gonna cross these hot coals so let's go as fast as I can" and tense up. [M: yep] So I would say really in the moments with Celia and with my husband and those I feel safe with that's when I'm really alive, that's when I'm really living [M: mmhmm].   (Interview #2, ll. 294-311, 314-36)

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[19]All names of third parties mentioned by participants are pseudonyms.

The friends unpack what they view as the cultural script for close friends: Such friends contact each other often, and when one friend misses an important moment to communicate, she is held accountable by the other friend. *Their* definition of close friends, however, is that they do *not* need to be in constant contact, that there might be, in Celia's words, "something else going on." Instead, when a close friend feels isolated after the rush of an emergency, then she is free to connect to the one who will listen without laying on a guilt trip about what may be perceived conventionally as a lack of communication. A friend can, in Kate's words, "feel safe" with such a friend, can feel like she's "really living." The friends' narration of this incident illustrates how their co-construction and comfort with a counter-cultural script for friendship have served them well over a long friendship that has included gaps of time and space.

Affirming, Nurturing Communication

This incident also provides an example of another provision of friendship that seems to have served them well: Celia's role as a nurturer. This role may very well be reciprocal, but in my interaction with the friends, I heard it most clearly from Celia. In the incident above, she talks about how "mad" she feels when other people make Kate "feel guilty," when others "have that kind of impact on her." Another trace of this role is in the opening quote of this chapter, when Celia says that, early on, she recognized that Kate was some one she wanted to get to know, and some one who seemed "like she'd be a heck of person if she'd just let herself go." A gentle assertion is present here: *"Kate, I think you would flourish more fully as a person if you'd let others see your emotions and ideas more often."* This assertion implies a willingness to be a nurturing friend: *"You are safe with me if you want to emerge from hiding."* Kate, for her part,

perceives that Celia offers this kind of nurture, and Kate is willing to embrace it. Early in our first

interview, Kate talks about

. . . this person in, in me that's a part of me that I don't always share with a lot of people. And I think I found out that Celia saw it there all along, and was always good about bringing it out, and was puzzled that other people didn't see that, um, and I guess I'm very cautious with that person, um.

Marcia: She needs to be protected?

Kate: Yeah, I don't just share her with everybody because some people just step on her. [M: mmhmm] And instead of just saying, "This is who I am and if you're gonna step on me that's your issue," I tend to make it my issue, and that's something I think I learned from our conversation [M: mmhmm].   (Interview #1, ll. 37-46)

This vulnerable "person in me" who needs to be "protected" is safe with Celia. Indeed, Kate

perceives that Celia brings the hidden person into the open and is puzzled when other people do

not affirm her.

At least in part, this nurturing of the vulnerable self occurs through communication. At

one point, early on when the friends shared their first work place, Kate needed to confront their co-

workers about the way that she saw them forming a clique and excluding her. Kate reports,

I actually said, "You know, you guys," I don't remember what I said, it was kinda one of those moments where I was so impassioned that I was just in the moment, and I don't really recall what I said, but I just remember I was standing up for myself, and everything, I don't know if everything changed for them, but it changed for me, and then when I kinda had the come-down after it, Celia was just like, "I knew you could do it; it was the right thing to do," you know, was just kinda there to catch me when I fell, . . . and it was more of a not falling from being destroyed, but just falling from the mountain, you know, it was kind of mountain-top experience, and . . . whether or not they treated me differently I don't know, I just remember feeling differently after that moment, [M: mmhmm] like I had confronted my fear [M: mmhhmm] and, just in confronting it, it wasn't a fear any more. [M: wow; C: mmhmm]   (Interview #2, ll. 116-127)

In this situation, Celia could have stepped in and confronted the co-workers on her friend's behalf

(which, for the sake of this dissertation, would also have been an interesting interactional move,

especially since the co-workers were probably predominantly black or white). However, Kate

chooses her moment (when the co-workers are in the lunch room), and Celia serves as supportive

audience. She does not intervene in the confrontation, but instead, according to Kate's narration, chooses to provide verbal support afterward. Celia's role as a nurturing friend is non-intrusive but clear and immediate in this situation.

Another moment of nurturing support occurs late in our first interview. Kate mentions that she is applying for seminary and is interested in serving an inner city church in Detroit. All three of us in this conversation know the "impliculture" (Nair, 2003) here–that an inner city church in Detroit probably would be predominantly–even entirely–black. Certainly the church subculture would be different from the one where Kate lives in exurban Highburg. Even the best of friends might choose a silent response–perhaps listening quietly and respectfully to the expression of such an aspiration. But Celia does not miss a beat:

Kate: I can see being called to an inner city church [M: mmhmm, mmhmm], I just [M: sure], that's what I keep hearing.

Celia: And I think you would be awesome. [You would be like

Kate: [That's why I just keep [C: Oh, my gosh,
that would be so cool!] . . .   (Interview #1, 570-574)

Celia's "you would be so awesome" is immediate and enthusiastic. Even when her friend continues to talk, she is whispering under her breath, "Oh, my gosh, that would be so cool!" Clearly, Kate's self-disclosure about an inner city church is not only safe with Celia, it could thrive with her. Celia is at the ready to nurture her friend without offering unsolicited advice or intervening when help is not requested. And Kate, for her part, is clearly willing to share her vulnerable self with Celia, thus further affirming Celia's role as nurturer. This communicatively co-constructed safe haven is one of the "provisions of friendship" (Rawlins, 1992, p. 230) that

probably has contributed to the longevity of the relationship and will continue to do so. Celia

thinks so, at least. When I comment on the "gaps" of the friends, I say that

[i]t's really . . . remarkable then that after pretty long stretches you kept coming back. [K: mmhmm] That's great.

Celia: Well, it kinda ties into what Kate was saying in the beginning that there's something inside of her that she doesn't release to a lot of people but somehow she and I made the connection, and I think it's something that will probably keep us connected forever, you know . . . .

(Interview #1, ll. 101-6)

Relatedly, another co-constructed "something that will probably keep us connected

forever" is amply illustrated in the featured narrative of this chapter, "Jamaica Changed

Everything." Interestingly, the friends–with their history of gaps in time and space–seem to have

needed Jamaica to become the friends that they are. They needed this intense, week-long trip,

early in their friendship with their significant others away from metro Detroit. The cultural

setting–Celia's home culture–was the perfect proving ground for the friends to become like family.

Featured Narrative: "Jamaica Changed Everything," Part 1

Interview #1: 14:02 (of 1:08:34)

1 Marcia: Wow. Now, um, to get to the early key scenes, speaking of early history, ah,
2   I was especially interested in the key scene,
3 you said it was an early significant experience, the trip to Jamaica [K: uh-huh] 1995,
4 if you'd just tell me a little bit more about that story I'd appreciate it.

5 Kate: We couldn't remember how it came about.
6 I mean, we know why we went,
7 one of her friends was getting married,
8 but we can't remember how it is [that we ended up

9 Celia: [Did they just invite themselves [K: yeah!; *laughing*]
10 or did we invite them? [*laughing*]

11 Kate: We don't remember how it came about
12 but it was a blast. [C: mmhmm]
13 Um, it was a blast.

14 Marcia: Now you were both working together? [K: yeah] Married? [K: yeah]

15 Celia: Mmhmm. Married.

16 Kate: Yeah, [we were both married, no kids.

17 Marcia: [Kids?

18 Celia: No kids. No kids! NK! BK! [C & M: *laughter*]

19 Kate: That was the start of kids, though. [All: *laughter;* C: yeah]
20 Ah, that was the trip that changed that changed everything. [*laughing*]
21 So, um, no, it was just easy,
22 it was like being family,
23 I mean, they included us like we'd been around forever, and got to do Jamaica people normally
24   don't do, with the local, and you know, did some tourist things but then went to Kingston,
25 I don't know how many people actually go to Kingston.
26 Um, it was just really easy for me, [like

27 Celia: [it was cool,
28   [it was fun.

29 Kate: [we'd been together forever,
30 and at that point it had only been, like, you know, three few years,
31 so that was the funniest thing, like how did that come about?
32 I don't know. [M: mmm; K: *laughter*]

33 Marcia: It wasn't even with your family?

34 Celia: Yeah, well, we, um, stayed with my family a little bit
35 and then we stayed in some villas, you know, again arranged by my mom. [M: mmhmm] Um,

36 Kate: We stayed with your dad.

37 Celia: We stayed with my dad, too,
38 and they were, you know, in two different parts of the country.
39 So, yeah, it was pretty much, it was with family.
40 A girlfriend of mine was gettin' married,
41 so it was just, [just stuff!

42 Marcia: [How long were you there?

43 Celia: I don't know. [K & C: A WEEK] Yeah, [K: I think it was a week, mmhmm] yeah, yeah.
44 Just they hung with us,

45 and we acted like we were back in Jamaica in, you know, a regular situation
46 and they hung tough,
47 they did good, they didn't [like

48 Kate: [eaten alive [C & K, *laughing*: BY MOSQUITOES!]

49 Celia: Yeah, yeah, yeah, but they, they, Kate and her husband just acted like
50   this is what they do every day.
51 They weren't stuck up,
52 they weren't, you know, snippy,
53 it was good, it was good.

54 Marcia: This was the four of you. [C: mmhmm, mmhmm]
55 OK. And you said, um, something, Kate, I think you said, "This changed everything"?
56 In what sense?

57 Kate: [*laughter noise*] That's when Rochelle [Celia's daughter] came on the scene. [K & M:
58 *laughter*]

59 Celia: That was, yeah, yeah, yeah. We, we, did.
60 We made a baby down there. [K & M: *laughter*] Yeah.

61 Kate: Ah, that's a hilarious story [C: *sighing laughter*], hilarious, but just, you know,
62 that's when that started that whole chapter of our lives [C: mommy] being different
63   [C: right, and mmhmm; M: yeah, wow].
64 I think as far as our friendship, it just, I don't remember comin' back
65 and it just was natural,
66 it was like it was "This is what we always do," so [M: mmhmm]
67 I just meant, yeah, it, it, it started the mommy chapter.

68 Marcia: OK. Yup. Well, um, your original paperwork here, you didn't have a turning point,
69 but it sound like this was a turning point.

70 Kate: Yeah, I guess you could say that.

71 Celia: Maybe, yeah, mmhmm.

72 Kate: It definitely changed the framework
73 and a-, another turning point was my choice to not be working. . .   **17:41**

Kate and Celia obviously enjoy this collaborative narration during our first interview. They

laugh often, freely share details of orientation with me, and offer global assessments like "it was a

blast" (Kate, ll. 12-3); "it was cool, it was fun" (Celia, ll. 27-8); and, most tantalizing of all, it was

"the trip that changed everything" (Kate, l. 20). The friends toss off a detail about mosquitoes

(spoken in unison, l. 48) and say that Celia and her husband "made a baby down there" (l. 60),

which is "a hilarious story" (Kate, l. 61). But when Kate turns the discussion toward another

turning point (l. 73), I am left wondering, "What was that story really about?" The friends tell it in

a kind of shorthand that they understand, but that I understand only in part. Later, as I analyzed

the story's structural elements, I saw clearly why I was left bewildered:

Table 5.1

Narrative Strand	Abstract	Complicating Action/ Turning Point	Resolution/Global Assessment	Evaluation
Requested Narrative: Visiting Jamaica	Marcia: request for "an early significant experience" (in OFS[20]) Marcia: "a turning point" (l. 67 and OFS). *Kate (l. 69) and Celia (l. 70) concur.*	**??** *[What, exactly, made this the "cool" trip that "changed everything"?]*	Kate: "it was a blast . . . it was a blast" (ll. 12-3). Celia: "It was cool, it was fun" (ll. 27-8).	Kate: "That was the trip that changed everything . . . . It was just easy, it was like being family" (ll. 20-2). Kate: "That's when that started that whole chapter of our lives [C: Mommy] being different" (l. 61).

In this collaborative narration, then, I heard plenty of orientation (to time, place, characters), I

knew this was an important story (since it was both an "early significant experience" and "a

turning point"), but I didn't fully understand why it resolved in the friends' minds as such a

wonderful trip that "changed everything," led them to think of themselves as family, and started a

new chapter in their lives and friendship. The shorthand of the friends' narration had omitted

[20]OFS: Our Friendship Story (the guided discussion that the friends completed on their own

sequences of complicating action, possibly including a turning point, that were central to the narrative.

Pondering this gap (yes, that *is* Celia and Kate's word) between the first and second interviews, I came to a decision as a researcher; I arrived at my own turning point, if you will. In my proposal, I had stated that my primary interest within the interview data would be the short narratives within the friendship stories as a whole. Kate and Celia, my first interview participants, though they told me much, had not shared with me any highly detailed full narrative episodes, despite my focus on "key scenes" in the design of Our Friendship Story and despite what I thought would be invitational prompts to tell full narratives during our first interview. They clearly experienced something important in "Jamaica Changed Everything," but since they had chosen to tell this story with virtually no complicating action–the "narrative clauses" that Labov and Waletzky (1967) claim are central to a narrative–I felt myself at a loss to comprehend the "impliculture" (Nair, 2003) of their co-construction. I wondered if something about the research design was flawed and if the project as I had envisioned it was in jeopardy.

I realized that my commitment to respecting the naturally-occurring interaction of the friends could be in jeopardy as well.   After all, since the friends in the entire first interview had not co-constructed any narratives that included all of what are considered to be key elements of narrative grammar, perhaps the greatest respect to the discursive practices of their "relational culture" (Wood, 1982) would be to leave well enough alone, not encouraging or pressing in new directions during the second interview. As Gubrium and Holstein (2009) warn, qualitative researchers are perhaps too keen to report "rich data and thick description" (p. 202). We are so

taken with the popular notion that "a good story be richly detailed and have a point" that we run the risk of arrogance or impertinence within the context of participants' own co-constructed discursive world (pp. 201-202). Instead, Gubrium and Holstein encourage researchers to study the "everyday aesthetics of narrativity" (p. 200) that evolve with their own norms within a discursive social context. The way that *participants* define a good story should guide the way that researchers listen for and represent narratives.

Nevertheless, in the second interview I decided to offer an intervention of sorts, intuiting that the friends might enjoy sharing additional details and structural elements from narratives they had already sketched. Although my self-interested goal was to hear more primary data, on some level, I also reasoned that, just as there are communicatively co-constructed provisions of friendship, so too an invitation to participate in a new (or seldom used) discourse practice might be a friend-like communicative provision that I could offer in my role as researcher. Furthermore, Celia and Kate had already reported that they appreciated the way that the "intervention" of Our Friendship Story had offered them a chance to talk about things they would not ordinarily discuss. I decided to do what seemed most invitational (Foss & Griffin, 1995): tell a story. I chose a narrative that would self-disclose to a moderate degree, offer a situation to which the friends might be able to relate, and model the kind of narrative grammar that I was hoping to hear from them. I intended that this discursive move would open a door for the friends, one that they could choose to walk through or not. If they chose not to walk through it, then I would need to accept whatever working definition of a good story that their own discourse would offer to me by the end of the second interview.

Featured Narrative: "Jamaica Changed Everything," Part 2

Interview #2: 4:18 (of 1:02:47)

 1 Marcia: . . . Now, um, so that you know some insider information about the research,
 2   um, and you probably can sense this already,
 3 but, um, I'm really looking in the writing to come to focus on stories,
 4 and I suppose that's obvious,
 5 but another level of stories that I really wanna watch for and listen for are the kind of stories within
 6   a story, the things that happen, like, within a few minutes, or maybe at most an hour or two
 7   [C: mm], where you tell your friends afterwards, "And then, and then, and then, and,"
 8 it, like, builds up to somewhere and then, "Oh, and then."
 9 And then the friend usually, like, comments on the story
10 and, um, so it's the story within the story, the episodes, um, the moments,
11 so like, for instance, um, when people ask me, as sometimes they do, you know, how is
12   it that you're, like, going to Plymouth Church?
13 And, um, there's such a cool story behind that
14 because when I was just devastated by this idea that we couldn't go back to, our, um,
15   our own church, I, I told Curtis [Marcia's son], . . .
16 he was enraged
17 and I know the only place he would consent to going would be to a church where he knew
18   somebody . . . .
19 At the same time, um, with Michael [Celia's son] being such a, like, big brother friend in Curtis's
20   life, I wanted to be sure that they got together . . . .
21 I wanted to be the good guy in some way in Curtis's life . . . .
22 And so I'm lookin' online for something that maybe these two boys can do together,
23 and I was at the Detroit Science Center,
24 and I noticed "free Sunday" coming up,
25 and I went, "Oh, a free Sunday, oh, the boys would like that!
26 And it's free,
27 and I'll be the good guy!"
28 And, you know, so I call up Celia and said, you know,
29   "Could Michael do the Science Center thing?" and, "Yeah, yeah,"
30 and I said, "And, this is, . . . the Science Center's downtown
31 and your church is downtown, too, yeah?" . . .
32 and Celia said, "Sure, you could come
33 and you'd be welcome and all that,"
34 um, that was the first time that we came to this church,
35 and so just to give a quick example of one of these times that just, again, sorta made all the
36   difference, and it was like a story within a story,
37 kind of our, our grief story and a friendship story, and a church story, and that little moment of
38   coming to your church for the first time was the story within the story [C: mmhmm],
39 and so when I think about what I've heard from you so far, it's just such a beautiful story of this
40   stretch of a long-term friendship,
41 and I heard the start of some of the stories within the story,

42 but I'm just wondering if in any of those stories within the story . . . what moment you could pick
43   out to, um, to like, describe yet today,
44 and, um, if nothing comes to mind, I've got a few possibilities that I heard
45 and I think there's a story within the story,
46 but I want to hear your thought first.
47 Is there, like, some moment or half an hour or hour where you say, "and then and then and then,"
48 and it stands out in your memory.

49 Celia: I need a prompter.

50 Kate: Yeah, [C: laughter] nothing's comin'.
51 I'm sure, it's just needing a jump to get started. [laughter]

52 Marcia: It's alright, it's alright.   **8:27**

        *First I offer a prompt about when Kate told off the co-workers in the office where Celia and
Kate first worked together. The friends provide more details. Then I offer this prompt:*

    13:26

53 Marcia: The next one, in case there's a story within the story here, um, I wrote down some
54 quotes, um, "In Jamaica, the trip that changed everything."
55 There was a time when you were eaten alive by mosquitoes,
56 and somebody said, "That's a hilarious story,"
57 and [*laughing*] I don't know if you, like, remember this or willing to talk about it, but [

58 Kate: [That's so
59 [K & C: "THE STORY WITHIN THE STORY"!

60 Celia: [*laughs*] Well, so we all ended up going to Jamaica for the wedding,
61   you know, [M: yeah]
62 and they came,
63 we were cool with that,
64 somehow, we ended up, John [her husband] and I, in the bushes, somehow [K: mm-mm] I can't,
65   [I don't know

66 Kate: [No, this is the story before that story!

67 Celia: OK, well, do the story before, but.

68 Kate: Alright. I think it was the first or second that night we were there.
69 I think we were in Montego Bay,
70 and we were goin' to get some food,
71 and so we went by the ocean somewhere, just some little, hut kinda thing to eat,
72 I don't even remember what we ate, [M: *laughter*]

73 but um, there was this Rastaman there,
74 and it's like, "I'm gonna build you this fire,
75 and it's gonna make mosquitoes go away,"
76 and so he ended up, like, smoking us out,
77 and, um, Celia and I ended up, yeah, I think it was you, but more so me, being covered head to
78   toe, like, from the very night on, from mosquito bites,
79 and I swell up
80 and I'm very itchy and uncomfortable, and [M: mmhmm],
81 you know, here you are thinking you're gonna be, you know, lookin' all hot on the beach
82 and I'm covered [*laughing*] in red welts and [M: *laughter*] itching and thinking,
83 "Oh, when it gets, when the sun goes down, it won't be so hot anymore,"
84 and it was hot. [C: mmhmm, the whole time]
85 Sun up, sun down [K & M: *laughter*] so that was something, something that I was used to,
86 but just sitting on logs, and just, it kinda felt funny
87   because I kinda felt like Celia was kinda out of her element in her country,
88 we were all kinda like, "Why are we staying here?
89 Why are we engaged with this Rastaman?"
90 It was just [*noise of distaste*] [M: *laughter*],
91 so that was the first story,
92 you can tell the other story.

93 Celia: Well, somehow, [K: *laughter*] so somehow, and I can't even remember
94   if it was daytime or nighttime,
95 was it daytime?

96 Kate: It was daytime.

97 Celia: I think so.

98 Kate: 'Cause we were at that cove or whatever.
99 What was that called?

100 Celia: Um.

101 Kate: That little inlet.

102 Celia: Blue Lagoon. [K: Blue Lagoon?] Cove. [K: uh-huh]
103   Um, so like, I think this was the next day or maybe a day after that,
104   after we'd kinda recovered from those mosquito bites and, you know,
105   chilled out for a little bit.
106 We ended up, John and I ended up somewhere in the bushes!

107 Kate: We thought you were going to find us something to eat.

108 Celia: Eat!–right. We, I think we were headed to find something to eat! [*laughing*]

109 Kate: And you decided to get busy. [M: *laughter*]

110 Celia: And we did end up in the bushes.
111 Um, and then, um, yeah! We–Rochelle! We conceived a kid [M: *laughter*],
112 I'm like, [K: *laughter*; M: in the bushes] in the bushes, in the bushes, in the bushes, you know,
113 and every now and then John will call her "Bush Baby,"
114 and she's like [K: *laughter*], "Oh, my god, I'm so,"
115 and now, she's, of course, gettin' to understand what it exactly means, [M: *laughter*] you know,
116 um, but, yeah, there was a story inside the story,
117 and, you know, I think we did find food, of course. [M & C: *laughter*] Afterwards. [*laughing, then*
118   "er"--*nonverbal indicating some discomfort*]

119 Kate: I remember going, "You, you what?" [All: *laughter throughout*]
120 'Cause that was just, woulda never crossed our minds!
121 "Wasn't it picky?" [All: *more laughter*]
122 Yeah, there are lotsa stories within the stories [M & C: *laughter interrupts Kate*].
123 [*laughing*] That was a good one to pull out.

124 Marcia: Wow. So did you suspect this was going on or just?

125 Kate: No, like I said, I'm like, "You what?!" [K & M: *laughter*]

126 Marcia: Just thought the food was takin' a long time.

127 Kate: Yeah! like, "Where did they go?"

128 Celia: Mmhmm. And it wasn't planned of course,
129 it was just kinda spontaneous. [All: *laughter*]

130 Marcia: Wow. I do want to see,
131   I, I wanna be in Jamaica and see what these bushes look like [C: *laughter*],
132 I picture bushes here, and yeah,
133 and it doesn't, doesn't seem like [

134 Celia: [just like a little trail, you know, off the beaten trail.
135   [M & C: *laughter*] It wasn't really me though,
136 I mean, come on now, look at me. [M: *laughter*] [How could it have] been me? me?
137   [All: *laughing*] That was then. That was then.

138 Marcia: I dunno know.
139 It could still be now. [All: *laughter*]   **18:14**

The first discursive feature that stands out to me in my invitation to tell "the story within

the story" is that the friends allowed me this very long turn of talk (ll. 1-50).   I offered an

evaluation before I began (saying my tale was "such a cool story (l. 14)), and the friends were willing to hear me out. They listened attentively to the story, giving me the sense that they considered it to be a "good" one–a story with "narrative adequacy" (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009) and a sufficient degree of "reportability" (Labov, 1981). Probably the friends were merely expressing politeness to a researcher that they had come to know, but their nonverbal attention indicated interest as well as politeness. I also note in this long turn at talk that I used repetition of the "and then" prompt both before and after the Curtis and Michael narrative (ll. 7-9, 48-9) in an attempt to lead the friends toward the kind of narration that would include complicating action. Labov (1981) indicates that the question "And then what happened?" is key to complicating action (p. 225).   Although this choice was not conscious, my repetition of the word "and" at the start of several narrative clauses (all in my own sequence of complicating action, ll. 23-34) reinforces my focus on the "and then?" narrative catalyst. At the end of the Curtis/Michael narrative, the friends responded immediately and repeatedly to my offer of prompts. I read their response as an acknowledgment that they understood my idea of the "story within the story" and as eagerness to co-construct with and for me as a researcher.

Unpacking this researcher's discursive turn a bit further, another table will summarize the narrative grammar of the two narrative threads in my long turn of talk:

Table 5.2

Narrative Strand	Abstract	Complicating Action/ Turning Point	Resolution	Evaluation
Researcher Identity (a narrative subtext)	Marcia: "some insider information about the research" (l. 1)	*Marcia tells the Curtis and Michael narrative in order to clarify what she is listening for.*[21]	*The friends are willing to tell "the story within the story" (about Jamaica and other episodes). Marcia offers prompts at their request.*	Kate: "That was a good one to pull out" (l. 123).
Curtis and Michael (researcher's narrative exemplar)	Marcia: "that little moment of coming to your church for the first time" (ll. 38-9)	*Marcia recognized a convergence of the need to get "the boys" together, a free day at the Detroit Science Center, and the location of Plymouth Church (ll. 20-28)*	Marcia/Celia (reported speech): "'Sure you could come and you'd be welcome and all that' . . that was the first time that we came to this church" (ll. 33-5).	Marcia: "such a cool story" (2, l. 14) Marcia (paraphrasing Kate): "a quick example of one of those times that just made all the difference" (ll. 36-7).

Several discursive features may have contributed to the perceived success of the Curtis and

Michael narrative strand. First of all, the setting for my narration of the Curtis and Michael strand

was Plymouth Church, since the three of us happened to be sitting in a meeting room there at the

time (the friends chose this location for our interviews). The setting, then, provides a sense of

immediacy to the Curtis and Michael/Plymouth Church narrative, even though it had taken place

several months before. Secondly, whether consciously or not, I integrate the speech of the friends

into my own speech. The resolution of the Curtis/Michael narrative strand features reported

speech of Celia (which she does not call into question or elaborate upon when she hears my

version of the story). In the evaluation, I paraphrase Kate's turn of phrase, that Jamaica "changed

everything," when I say that the Curtis/Michael narrative was "one of those times that just made

all the difference." Again, I cannot claim conscious agency in these discursive moves, but the

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[21]Whenever possible in all tables, I have used direct quotes from the interviews to supply the components of narrative grammar. When the quotations would be too lengthy for the space available in a table, I have summarized (using black ink and italics).

direct integration of the talk of the friends into my long turn at talk is a kind of collaboration; my monologue incorporating the words of the friends at key moments (the resolution and evaluation) offer a model of the kind of narrative co-construction that I hoped they would be willing to attempt.

I was highly gratified at the friends' response to the two narrative strands in my long turn at talk. The friends co-construct a kind of coda (ll. 51-53) to both narratives, returning our conversation to real time and to the more conventional discursive practices of an interview. Their coda indicates their willingness to participate in telling "the story within the story." Later in the interview, after the friends offer additional co-construction of "Jamaica Changed Everything," Kate provides an evaluation of the researcher narrative strand: "That was a good one [a story within the story] to pull out" (l. 123). I took this statement to be an affirmation of both my illustration of the kind of narrative data I was seeking and the choice of the Jamaica prompt. The friends were indeed willing to co-construct a narrative with complicating action; I concluded that this kind of narration was well within the range of the discursive genres native to their relational culture.

Turning to the elaboration of "Jamaica Changed Everything" that Kate and Celia provided in the second interview, we find several features that contribute to co-constructed relational and individual identity:

Table 5.3[22]

Narrative Strand	Abstract	Complicating Action/ Turning Point	Resolution/Assess-ment of Resolution	Evaluation
Requested Narrative: Visiting Jamaica	Marcia: request for "an early significant experience" (in OFS) Marcia: "a turning point" (OFS and 1, l. 67). *Kate (1, l. 69) and Celia (1, l. 70) concur.*	*The two "stories within the story" ("Mosquitoes" and "The Bushes") illustrate why visiting Jamaica was so enjoyable and important.*	Kate: "it was a blast . . . it was a blast" (1, ll. 12-3). Celia: "It was cool, it was fun" (1, ll. 27-8).	Kate: "That was the trip that changed everything . . . . It was just easy, it was like being family" (1, ll. 20-2). Kate: "That's when that started that whole chapter of our lives [C: Mommy] being different" (1, l. 62).
Mosquitoes	Marcia: "the story within the story" (2, l. 53) Celia & Kate: "the story within the story" (2, l. 59)	Kate: "He ended up, like, smoking us out" (2, l. 76).–*Turning Point*	Kate: "Celia and I ended up . . . being covered . . .from mosquito bites" (2, ll. 77-8).	Kate: "It kinda felt funny" (2, l. 85) for reasons she explains in 2, ll. 87-8.
The Bushes	Marcia: "the story within the story" (2, ll. 57) Celia & Kate: "the story within the story" (2, l. 59)	Celia: "[My husband] and I ended up somewhere in the bushes!" (2, l.106)–*Turning Point*	Celia: "We made a baby down there" (1, l. 60).	Kate: "Ah, that's a hilarious story . . . when that started that whole chapter of our lives [C: mommy] being different" (1, ll. 61-2).
Friendship (relational identity)	Celia: "They hung with us, and we acted like we were back in Jamaica" (1, ll. 44-5).	*The two "stories within the story" ("Mosquitoes" and "The Bushes") illustrate how the friends became like family.*	Celia: "It was good, it was good" (1, l. 53). Kate: "It was just natural" (1, l. 65).	Celia: "They hung tough, they did good" (1, ll. 46-7). "Kate and her husband just acted like this is what they do every day . . ." (1, ll. 49-53). Kate: "It was just easy, it was like being family . . . . "They [C. & John] included us like we'd been around forever" (1, ll. 21-23).

The narrative that had been tantalizingly obscure to me was now clear to me in the second interview. The friends had supply details of complicating action by con-constructing two "stories within the story" that, in effect, both belong in the third cell (complicating action/turning point) of

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[22]In both tables and the text, when more than one transcript excerpt is referenced from the featured narratives of any of the friends, the Arabic numeral 1 in the parenthetical reference will indicate the first excerpt, while the Arabic numeral 2 in the parenthetical reference will indicate the second excerpt.

the initially requested narrative about visiting Jamaica (these "cells within the cell" are represented by the shading in the table above). Interestingly, the friends' co-narration of these "stories within a story" is reciprocal by co-constructed negotiation. Celia volunteers the bushes story (2, ll. 64-5); Kate objects, since the key incidents would be out of sequence if The Bushes were told first (l. 66). Celia pulls back, allowing Kate to take the lead in narrating The Mosquitoes (2, ll. 67-91). Then Kate invites Celia to "tell the other story" (2, l. 96), and she does so (ll. 93 ff.). The friends enact a discursive dance that seems to reflect the reciprocity and egalitarian quality of their friendship. Both of their narratives styles include nonverbal zest and a clear turning point for each episode. Now I knew why Jamaica was "the trip that changed everything." The two episodes that comprise the complicating action and turning point of the Jamaica narrative are deeply personal embodiments of friendship. The humor, vulnerability, and intimacy[23] of these shared experiences serve to establish a new level of friendship: Celia and Kate attain the relational confidence of sisters; they become friends who are like family (Kate, 1, l. 22).

The process of friends becoming family involves relational and individual identity work that is evident in the Jamaica narratives. Celia, in effect, serves as a kind of gatekeeper (though a personally invested one) or sponsor to her home culture. She has made arrangements for the friends and their spouses to stay at the homes of various relatives in Jamaica. She and her husband initiate their friends to her home city of Kingston, which, as Kate acknowledges (1, ll. 24-5), may

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[23]The vulnerability and intimacy of The Bushes narrative was reinforced for me later in the second interview. When I asked the friends how the research process might have been different had I been a black researcher, Celia replied, in part: "No! I just told it, I just told the white lady that we did it in the bushes! I think I [M: *laughter*] woulda told the black lady that, too" [*laughter*] (Interview #2, ll. 637-9).

be not be on every tourist itinerary. The catalyst for the trip was a wedding of another of Celia's

friends. This trip seems to be the first to Jamaica for Kate and her husband, and, in Celia's mind,

it was a success:

Just they hung with us,
and we acted like we were back in Jamaica in, you know, a regular situation
and they hung tough,
they did good, they didn't [like

Kate: [eaten alive [C & K, *laughing*: BY MOSQUITOES!]

Celia: Yeah, yeah, yeah, but they, they, Kate and her husband just acted like
        this is what they do every day.
They weren't stuck up,
they weren't, you know, snippy,
it was good, it was good.   (1, ll. 44-53)

Apparently, danger was involved in this culturally-situated friendship experience. To use Nair's

(2003) analogy of the rope trick, a possibility existed that the friendship would fall to earth in

pieces rather than reorganize as a whole entity. Kate and her husband, in Celia's mind, at least,

might have become "stuck up" or "snippy" in her home culture; they might have performed as

arrogant American tourists rather than as trusted friends. (Kate may want to avoid discussing this

possibility; note how she interjects the mosquitoes incident into Celia's reflection above.) But

Kate and her husband were up to the challenge; they accepted the Jamaica experience as an

adventure that was ultimately–despite the mosquitoes–"easy." Celia says that she and her husband

"acted like we were back in Jamaica in, you know, a regular situation," while "Kate and her

husband just acted like this is what they do every day." In Jamaica, Celia is the cultural insider–a

gatekeeper and sponsor to her friend's new experience; she is also a nurturer (in the sense

discussed above) who welcomes her friend's flourishing in the Jamaica experience and affirms her friend's claim that "it was like being family" (1, l. 22). Certainly The Bushes is a narrative in which Celia affirms that Kate is as close as family. Who else but a very close friend would be privy to the immediate before and after of such an experience?

I recognize that this is a debatable claim, but it seems to me that the friendship *needed* this complex rope of narrative strands called Jamaica Changed Everything. Celia and Kate needed to become sister friends as the preface to "that whole chapter of our lives [C: mommy] being different" (1, l. 61). For not only did Celia and then Kate become parents, their work roles changed (with Celia continuing as a social worker and Kate becoming a stay-at-home mom), and then they no longer lived near each other. Jamaica gave the friends the discursive and relational foundation for the friendship they share today. Kate reflects,

> I mean, we could have let so many different things interfere with our, our relationship. You know, some people I know get upset, "Well, she didn't reach out to me . . . ," and I've had moments when I've felt like that, but . . . , you know, just talking about this has made me think about, like I said, friendship in a whole new way. Um, because I feel like I'm surrounded by women that if you don't have that constant contact then they're not a good friend, you know, like, if you look on Facebook and stuff, all these women that are our age that are still going out clubbing and I'm like, "How do you do that when you've got kids?" and to me, that's not honoring who you are, it's trying to be somebody you used to be, and I think our friendship has evolved and grown with the women that we are.   **(Interview #1, 362-72)**

The era of "clubbing," for Celia and Kate, was their Jamaica era, and the friends enjoyed it immensely. But the new era–the new chapter, to use the terminology of this study–is very good, too, at least in part because the foundation for the friendship's longevity was established in discursive and embodied ways in Jamaica. The friendship of Celia and Kate is still a voluntary relationship, but it has also attained the kind of unconditional attachment of siblings. Siblings

simply are connected to one another, whether they tend the connection or not. Celia and Kate

simply are friends, no matter what the gaps of time and space have become.

Now the friends are at ease with passing on their legacy. As Celia says when asked if

"perseverance" is indeed a shared value of their friendship,

Between that, perseverance, and, and commitment, maybe? [M: mmhmm, yeah] Just, um, a sense that we deserve to maintain our relationship, we deserve to expose our families to our relationship and give them a chance at, you know, their own relationships, um, if they choose to grab 'em, yeah [M: mmhmm], yeah, yeah.   **(Interview #1, ll. 373-76)**

For Celia and Kate, then, their friendship story includes a turning point–Jamaica, far removed

from metro Detroit–where friends became family, and this kinship may continue to the next

generation. The stage is set: Most of Celia and Kate's get-togethers now include family and are

held in one or the other of their homes; their husbands have their own friendship; and each couple

serves as godparents to one of the other couple's children. They even speak jokingly about an

"arranged marriage" between one of Celia's daughters and Kate's son (Interview #1, ll. 302-3).

Celia and Kate both take their parenting role very seriously, and as sister friends, they are

modeling for the next generation a kind of friendship that both includes and transcends race.

VI: ERICA AND JYNIL

Jynil (L) and Erica (photo provided by the friends)

Marcia: . . . [T]he title of the study is . . ."Black and White Do Not Make Grey: Stories of Cross-race Friendship in Metro Detroit." . . . I was thinking later, you know, maybe I'm being presumptuous, "black and white do not make grey," well, they do make grey, you know, when you take it like in art class . . . . [W]hat I'm wondering is, in the case of your friendship, like all of its aspects not just the racial, . . . what is the color of your friendship?

Jynil: [*laughing*] It's funny 'cause my response would be grey.

Erica: Really?

Jynil: Just because we're a mix . . . . I think we, we've gotten a lot from each other, you know, kind of, our beings have changed in a way from being friends.

Erica: Right. I would say yellow. It's very sun-shiny to me.

Jynil: There we go. I like that.

Erica: Well, we both had kind of a funny conversation about being high energy. And she's like, "I didn't even notice!" But then she says, "I'm a little high energy myself," and so, I think that sometimes when we get together all the excitement is just kinda normal for us.

Jynil: [*laughing*] It's not normal for everyone else!

Erica: It's not normal for everybody else. I'm being a lot more mindful of it now since I was kind of told about how I perceive sometimes. I want yellow because to me, Jynil, you and I are both, we always try to see the glass is half full.

Jynil: Yep.

Erica: I mean, we both, we definitely are like that.

Jynil: I like yellow better.

Erica: Our goal is always to get to the other side of good, you know, if anything's goin' on—not that we don't talk about problems and things like that—but we always try to look at the up side, and that is definitely something we have in common. We try to, if there's a problem, you know, we try to find, you know, a solution or a way of copin' with it. That's just kinda something we have in common, and we encourage each other.

Jynil: That's true. I like yellow. I vote for yellow [*laughing*].

Marcia: I'm goin' with yellow if that's what you guys are goin' with.

Erica: Mmm!

Jynil: Yes.   **(Interview #2, ll. 12-37)**

Introduction

Yellow is the right color for Erica and Jynil. They told me that, when they first met, the first impression of each included the smile of the other. Erica and Jynil smile often. Erica's smile spreads across her glowing brown face framed with a short Afro and accented by stylish glasses. Jynil's smile and frequent laughter emanate from a petite woman with very light skin, freckles, and shoulder-length, light brown hair. The friends speak rapidly, compliment each other frequently, and laugh freely.

Erica and Jynil met in 2002 when Erica was hired by the nonprofit where Jynil worked in suburban Detroit. They bonded for many reasons. As Jynil says, "We were in the same age bracket, the same situation in our education, the same situation in our careers, new parents, and we had all these things in common" (Interview #1, ll. 271-272). They worked together for four years. Now their work places are 25 minutes apart, and their homes at least 45, so they have needed to become more intentional about connecting. They meet to talk during their lunch hours, somtimes at a restaurant they call our "special place." Their birthday lunches are non-negotiable

commitments. When face time isn't possible, they communicate over the phone at least once a week, sometimes including the 45-minute option while commuting.

Despite the distance, their lives still intersect. They are both still working in the nonprofit sector, and they are glad their organizations are in the same service area (Detroit). Erica serves on the board of Jynil's organization. Although I did not hear from them that they care for one another's children on a regular basis, they did say that in an emergency, each would trust the other to care for her children. Especially when their children were little, their friendship conversations often centered on parenting. The two families attend each other's family events, and according to Erica, the children "look at each other kind of as extended family" (Interview #1, l. 575).

In order to complete the Our Friendship Story guided discussion, Erica and Jynil chose to meet over two lunches, totaling five hours of food and conversation. Afterward, they repeatedly told me how "fun" that stage of the research was for them. Even when they disagree (as they did initially in the transcript excerpt above), they do not argue. Every time I met with Erica and Jynil, they both were wearing black and white professional clothes. The last time, I also wore black and white. Sure enough, I matched. Every time I met with them, they also stayed beyond our appointed time, chatting with just the two of them. The time together was never enough.

Communicative Co-Construction of Friendship

Convergence

The convergence within the relationship of Erica and Jynil is also reflected in their conversational interaction. These are friends who often finish one another's sentences. For

example, when reporting to me about topics that they had discussed during the Our Friendship

Story process, the friends reflect on Jynil's experience during Erica's second pregnancy:

Erica: I did not know until she [Jynil] told me that that even, I didn't, you know

Jynil: how that affected me bigtime, watching your belly grow and just going through all of that.

(Interview #1, ll. 497-499)

Commenting on an early moment in their relationship, when they were sharing a work space in

their jobs at a non-profit, Erica begins a sentence and Jynil concludes:

Erica: . . . It wasn't like, you know, so stressful, 24 hours, I mean, it, it was a job, you know, you had to do things and you had to do a lot, but it, it was a nice environment and
Jynil: when you compare it to working with refugees [E: yeah, yeah it was] it was much more doable to be a parent. **(Interview #1, ll. 508-512)**

In both examples above, convergence in these particular sentences indicates an intimate

knowledge of one another's experiences and values. The friends aren't talking about favorite

foods or what to do for a good weekend, for instance; they are referencing issues of parenting and

work/life balance. As they conversed with me over the course of our interviews, I found that

convergence runs deep for these friends. They share a high level of commitment to parenting,

marriage, their professions, and community service. No wonder, then, that they finish each other's

sentences and speak at the fastest rate of the three pairs of friends. With all their time-consuming

commitments–including the commitment to their friendship–they maximize their time at every

turn.

Perspective-Taking and Advocacy

Erica and Jynil met, in fact, when they both worked at a community-minded nonprofit in a

suburban county in metro Detroit. They describe the experience this way:

Erica: . . . Jynil just, she just, she just, . . . you know, had a really special relationship with people and kinda just saw the world as a bigger place, whereas I think most people we worked with did not. They kinda saw the world as what happens within my area and, you know, you know, I didn't know much about the county at that time, that, you know, people, didn't even like it . . . south of Sixteen Mile; there was all this stigma when people who live south of Sixteen Mile . . . .   Jynil really helped me manage during the difficult times because she was such a down to earth person, who did, like I said, have a, a bigger purpose, and it was just, like I said, it was so different, . . . you know, I was able to be more open-minded 'cause . . . I was pretty closed-minded too . . . . I'm thinkin,' "If it's not a big issue then it's not an issue," and I had to learn that, you know what? OK, so somebody's mad at the leader they're with. You know, she [Jynil] would treat every situation like it was the most important thing in the world, and I learned from that . . . . You know what? it may not be what I worked with–people dying and torture–but guess what, . . .

Jynil: It's just as important to them.

Erica: It's just as important to them, you know.

Jynil: That was such an adjustment, I'm sure for you because you were dealing with life and death [E: Yeah, and I thought] situations every day and then it had to have seemed so unbelievably petty. We had a lot of discussions about that [*laughter*].

Marcia: Wow.   **(Interview #1, ll. 343-364)**

The friends agree that a non-profit such as the one they worked for should focus on the needs of

the community and serve with a sense of internal camaraderie, so they both felt disillusioned about

the organizational climate of their work place. Together, they created a counter-cultural

element–two friends in solidarity–that both helped them do their work in the way they thought was

best for clients and also allowed them a personal sense of well-being in a potentially hostile

environment. Discursively in the excerpt above, the friends make clear that one of their

communicative "provisions of friendship" (Rawlins, 1992, p. 230) is perspective-taking. In this

case, Jynil helps Erica move from a sense of disillusionment with their co-workers to a realization

that they are simply working from within their own limited frames of reference.

Another allusion in the excerpt above draws us into the cultural geography of metro

Detroit, a place where sometimes regional boundaries (in this case, the 16 Mile Road border) often

invoke stereotyped identities. Erica perceived that, once she started a new job in northern

Macomb County, her experience south of 16 Mile was not always understood or respected. Jynil

buffered this dissonance. Later in the friendship, Erica reciprocated. When Jynil was being

considered for a job in Detroit (which is south of 8 Mile Road), Erica, who had previously worked

in Detroit, discursively intervened. When I asked the friends about how race might affect their

interaction, Jynil replied, "She [Erica] shared a lot with me about what I would, um, experience

working in Detroit. You know, not, not in a negative way, but [E: reality] here's a heads-up!"

[*laughter*] (Interview #1, ll. 1196-1197). Furthermore, Erica moved beyond one-on-one counsel

with her friend. Here she describes some of what went on behind the scenes as Jynil was vying for

the Detroit job:

Erica: I know the culture [of the non-profit world in Detroit], right, mmhmm. Jynil was comin' from Lakeside Village [J: yeah, *laughter*]. You know Detroit, they need to make sure this outsider's not gonna come around [J: right, right, right] and try to fix us and that kinda thing, they needed to feel very comfortable with that, and

Marcia: Yeah. Was this raced at all?

Erica: Hmm?

Marcia: Was this involving race at all, do you think?

Erica: It was in terms of how comfortable she would feel, you know, they just, you see Lakeside Village, you don't know where it is, you know, ... They didn't know . . . that she has all kind of friends . . . . They didn't know her other than . . . she worked in Macomb County, she lives in Lakeside Village, how, how in the world can she feel comfortable here? [M: oh]

Jynil: Well, and they were, I think, I don't know if it was that they were in, not wanting to bring it up, but they did not bring that up with me at all [E: yeah, I don't think it was] during my interview, so it was helpful that Erica knew that and

Marcia: could talk about it more explicitly, or?

Jynil: Yeah, could be real about it.

Erica: Well, 'cause what, . . . what [the decision maker needed to know] was, what I told her, that really, "Oh, OK," she didn't ask, but I told her. You know, . . . basically Jynil can come and work with

any group of people in a way, um, that is, um, uplifted, uplifting, a lot, a lot of people do things, I mean, you have people, "Oh, I, I chose to come here to help these poor people." That's not Jynil's [M: yeah, yeah] personality, and that, and [the decision maker] did not want that. [M: right] She wants somebody who's gonna push people and help develop, I mean, it's a youth program, you need to develop youth. You don't need to feel sorry for them, you need to develop them [M: right], you're not comin', Jynil's a human service person because she cares about people, not because she wants to feel better about herself. [M: yeah] And you get a lot of that, you know, "Oh, these poor people I just feel so bad, I wish I could," that's, that's not [J: that's not where I'm at] her way [J: no] I don't care what your plight is, you know, she's lookin' at your possibilities, . . . what you can do, not "Oh, pitiful you," but, "Wow, but this, you could do this," and that's what [the decision-maker] needed to hear [M: mmhmm], you know, 'cause people do, they h-, have a lot of bias people come and fix the city, [M: mmhmm, mmhmm] so

Marcia: Yeah.

Erica: And I knew, I mean, they're not gonna a-, I mean, they allude to it, but they don't ask, [M: yeah] and it's not a racial thing, I mean, you have people from the suburbs come, you know, people of all races come gonna work with these pitiful people, or these poor people, these disadvantaged people, that attitude versus [M: right], "Look, you, I don't care where you, your plight is, you've got the potential to do more and better" . . . .

Marcia: Sure. . .

Jynil: And I knew I wouldn't have any problems working in Detroit. I have in fact, I've found the people of Detroit to be, um, far more kind and friendly and social than a lot of, of the people I meet elsewhere, honestly. . . . I get far more smiles and "Hey, how ya doin,' what can I help you with?" you know, I get way more of that in Detroit than anywhere else. [M: mmhmm, yeah] I haven't, you know, I've enjoyed my tenure in Detroit so far, honestly. I mean of course there's challenges, primarily financial, [E: yeah, always] the money.

Erica: But it's, because we can be honest with one another [M: right, mmhmm] about things, I mean, I, I can share with Jynil. We can talk about race. . . .
<div align="right">(Interview #2, ll. 257-301 & 307-315)</div>

The perspective-taking that Erica undertakes on behalf of her friend is complex and impressive.

She knows that a common perception of Detroiters is that suburbanites want to come in and help

"these pitiful people," and that such assistance is not welcome. She knows that the decision maker

for Jynil's potential job might only see Jynil in terms of her suburban and exurban identity. She

knows what Jynil's perspective is toward her work and the clients for whom she works. Erica

conveys all of this–unasked–to the decision maker. Erica recognizes that in the social landscape of

metro Detroit–where race may or may not be a factor, depending on the moment in the

conversation above–*not* asking Jynil is the discursive default; however, Erica's advocacy about her friend's identity is not only accepted but becomes a decided advantage for Jynil.

This kind of discursive feistiness–all the while maintaining a smile and a positive rather than cynical attitude about a social climate–is what led me to ask the friends if one of their mottos might be, "You and me against the world." No, they eventually concluded, it's not "You and me against the world," but "You and me can change the world" (Interview #2, ll. 458-459). Jynil posed this adaptation of my idea, and Erica readily agreed. Though I am not generally given to acquiescence about any one's ability to "change the world," I can see from the interaction of these friends and the material conditions that sometimes result–Jynil did get the Detroit job after all–that at least in their immediate social world, they are right. They *do* change *their* world.

I said as much in my response after the "change the world" discussion:

But I see a little of that or maybe a lot of that also in the whole, um, confirmation story, that a hostile situation for you [Jynil] was buffered by Erica's support and a potentially hostile situation for you **[Erica] as a Muslim was buffered by the fact that this was her confirmation so you belonged.**
                                        (Interview #2, ll. 461-4).

In the following narrative about Jynil's Catholic confirmation, I learned much more about their discursive provisions of friendship and about communicatively co-constructed identity.

Featured Narrative: "The Best Night"

Interview #1: 51:00 (of 1:39:13)

1 Marcia: Um, a little more on values here, um. I hear strongly in your conversation again the
2   values of family, career, community, um,
3 I also see the value of faith in your friendship, I mean,
4   based on how you went through Catholic confirmation together?
5 Um, what do you think about that idea–that that would be an additional shared value,
6 that's quite strong for you.

7 Jynil: We're both spiritual people,

 8 and there was another area that Erica really helped me with.
 9 We are, um, of different religions.
10 Actually she helped me with be-, to become a Catholic basically and [M: OK] supported me by
11   being there when [a significant family member] wouldn't.

12 Marcia: mmhmm

13 Erica: But [J: and] it was amazing
14 how she did it though.
15 I mean, you know, she, she was, she did do the soul-searching.
16 'Cause, you, you were, your mom is, your mom was raised Catholic [J: mmhmm]
17 and, you know, she was very persistent
18   to be able to find, um, a, a class or parish that would work with, you know,
19 hey, again she was not going to sacrifice her home time for it [M: mmhmm, right].
20 "I'm working with you during the day" [M: mmhmm]
21 um, and I don't know if you're Catholic but, you know, even the,
22 you haven't been married in the Catholic Church, find somebody who would say,
23   "You know what? Your spirituality is individual. [M: mmhmm]
24   We're gonna work with you." [M: mmhmm,mmhmm]
25 She was extremely persistent.
26 It took, how many months did it take you to find--

27 Jynil: It took about six months [E: To find] looking into probably eight different churches.

28 Marcia: Oh, my goodness.

29 Erica: And then making the commitment

30 Jynil: And I finally found, um, religious education,
31 that they call it, formation [M: mmhmm]
32   uh, and structure that was willing to do a lunch type of training [M: mmhmm]
33   every week for months.
34 There were four of us that went through the training with her that fortunately I wasn-,
35 I was the only one for a little while
36 and then she found other people to bring on board [M: mmhmm],
37 so she was, um, really between Erica and Joyce over at at, uh, at the church [M: mmhmm],
38 that's the only reason it happened [M: wow]
39   because she was so flexible [E: yeah; M: that's great]
40 and they were, and they were willing to say, "Well, you're an individual [M: mmhmm; E: right]
41 I re-, we recognize you weren't married in the Catholic church." [M: mmhmm]
42 Um, they wouldn't recognize the marriage obviously
43 but they recognized the fact that I was,
44 you know, the Catholic church has all [E: oh, yeah] their rules and [M: oh, yeah] all of that so [M:
45   right, right]
46 I found somebody that realized that I needed it for me [M: sure]

47   and what my obstacles were and were willing to, to do that [M: mmhmm] so–

48 Erica: I mean, there was [M: amazing] a lot of perseverance.
49 I mean, there really was a lot of perseverance [M: wow]
50   and, you know, making it work, making it work even in the face of
51 "No, no, can't do this, can't do that, can't do,"
52 it would have been so easy for somebody to say,
53 "Number one, this must not be the right faith for me 'cause you're not welcoming."
54 She was very committed, I mean, and just
55 "I'm gonna find a way to find a 'yes,'"
56 that's just kinda [M: perseverance] that's who she is [M: uh, huh],
57 and, I mean, I just thought it was fantastic . . . .[24]
58 I, I mean, I-, I wanted to support it,
59 I thought it was fantastic,
60 you know, it was important [M: yeah].
61 It was very important,
62 and it was [

63 Marcia: [So, Erica, you're Catholic.

64 Erica: No, [M: No] I'm Muslim.

65 Marcia: OK, and so [*pausing*] were you then, um, a sponsor of the spiritual journey
66 or how did that work?

67 Erica: No, 'cause actually, . . . [*laughing*] we're just a supportive, you know [M: OK],
68 just supportive, and we really talked,
69 we talked a lot about faith and religion and [J: a lot]
70 we talked a lot about faith and religion, [J: a lot]
71 especially when she was searching and trying to figure out just what it was she wanted,
72 and we were able to have really good, um, conversations about it.

73 Server: . . . ladies working together?

74 Marcia: Yes, we are. . .[25]

75 Erica: So we, I mean, it was, I-, we talked a lot.
76 I mean it was, we had a lot of conversations about faith, and religion,
77 you know, you know whole doctrine [M: mmhmm] of of of different faiths
78 and we we we had a chance, you know,

_____

[24]At this point, the server interrupts to ask about beverages (six lines deleted).

[25]A short conversation (nine lines deleted) ensues with the server, in which we talk about our work together for a university and about beverages. The server departs, teasing me (she knows me as a "regular").

79 and it it really did help you, I think, I mean, in terms of being able to solidify,
80 "This is what I believe [M: yes]
81 and this is why this works for me," [you know, you know

82 Marcia: [Wow.

83 Erica: spiritually, culturally, religiously, this is why this works for me.
84 'Cause we were a-, we, we were able to have those conversations [M: mmhmm]
85 they would've had to talk through, you know, some of those things [M: amazing].

86 Jynil: And one of our friends, her name is Jody.
87 She's Jewish [M: mmhmm],
88 so she sat right across from us,
89 so there were three of us.

90 Marcia: Oh, how interesting.

91 Jynil: And so [M: oh, wow] we had a lot of interfaith [E: mmhmm, dialogue] dialogue [M: wow]
92   about what, you know, [M: mmhmm] what all the beliefs are, what we believed in and,
93 and we were able to be open-minded, and [M: mmhmm], you know, understand each other,
94 and it was great.
95 I guarantee, I was the only person [M: *laughter*] being confirmed that evening
96   that had a Muslim and a [Jewish friend attending [M: *laughter*]

97 Erica: [Jewish friend there

98 Jynil: in support of her [M: *laughter*].

99 Erica: We were [so excited.

100 Jynil: [Guaranteed.

101 Erica: It was, it was, um

102 Jynil: That was [the best night

103 Erica: [the night before Easter. It was so fan-, it was the night before Easter,
104 it was the, the ma-, the, the Easter Eve mass [M: oh, yeah].

105 Jynil: the Vigil, [M & E: Vigil] the [Easter Vigil, yup.

106 Erica: [It was so fantastic.
107 It was just, [it was great.

108 Marcia: [Oh my goodness.

109 Jynil: Yeah, it was, it was,
110 and it was helpful for me,
111 because [a significant family member] was, um, not supportive in any way [M: aww].
112 It was awful.
113 That whole process was awful, awful, awful,
114 and Erica was always there for me for that. Always. [M: oh, my]
115 And, he wasn't there [M: mmhmm],
116 um, a little part it was partially my lack of communication and [M: OK] and my lack of, um, my
117   being afraid of really letting [the family member] know [M: mmhmm, mmhmm]
118   what my feelings were
119   and how important they were to me,
120 so that was partially on me, I would say
121 but, um, yeah, but Erica and Jody being there made me cry.

122 Erica: Yeah, it was, it was fantastic.
123 I was so proud of her.
124 It was great.

125 Jynil: Because I didn't know.
126 I did not know [M: yeah] that they were coming [M: aw, sweet]
127 and, I mean, I, it made me cry. [It was

128 Marcia: [yes

129 Erica: wouldn't have missed it, we definitely wouldn't have missed it. [M: mmm]

130 Jynil: It was amazing. [M: Wow]

131 Erica: It was great.

132 Marcia: So I'd like to know the, um, parish that finally, um, worked for you.

133 Jynil: St. Therese of Lisieux? [M: OK.] Do you know where they are? [On Schoenherr,

134 Marcia: [No. I'd like, OK

135 Erica: That's Shelby Township.

136 Jynil: It's Shelby, yeah, Schoenherr and [E: beautiful, beautiful parish] between 21 and 22 Mile.
137   Schoenherr [M: OK, OK, mmhmm] Beautiful.

138 Erica: Very modern. I mean, it's it's it's hilarious when you see the priest with the microphone and
139   the [*laughing*] screen

140 Jynil: And he's young,

141 Erica: He's very young.
142 He's Polish, isn't he? He's Polish.

143 Jynil: Yes.

144 Erica: He is great.
145 It was a great service. [M: mmhmm]
146 It was great.

147 Jynil: It was very intimidating doing that, going in and having con- my confession before being. confirmed.
148 I cried then too. [E: laughter]
149 I'm a wimp.

150 Erica: No.

151 Jynil: No, I cried, bawled my eyes out after confession,
152 and I did not expect that at all [M: yeah]. Wow.

153 Marcia: Unexpected tears can be the strongest.

154 Jynil: Yes. [M: mmhmm] Yes. It was a very moving moment [M: mmhmm] for me, too,
155 which helped me know that that was the right decision for me and [M: sure], you know
156   [M: mmhmm],
157 and that helped me go through with it
158 because I had opposing forces working against [M: sure] me there [M: sure] so--

159 Marcia: wow

160 Jynil: but I had the support that I needed to [M: right] get me through
161 [E., softly: It was great.] [M: right, oh]

162 Jynil: It was [wonderful.

163 Marcia: [What a great story. Amazing.

164 Erica: I was telling that I go to St. Clare Mass on Wednesday.
165 The kids love it.

166 Jynil: What time is it?

167 Erica: It's nine, eight, no,
168 I don't know what time it is.

169 Marcia: I think it is nine. [E: Nine, eight.]
170 The last one this spring [E: Friday] is Friday at 9. [E: Friday] Yup. It is, it is,

171 I'm not Catholic either,
172 but I enjoy it very much.

173 Jynil: Oh . . . . . [. . .I'd like to go

174 Erica: [I mean, the kids, to be able to have, the kids, they really plan and participate in the [M:
175   mmhmm] liturgy,
176 so, I mean, it's, it's really nice [M: yeah],
177 and Father _____, he, he's a nice guy. [J: wow] [M: yep]

178 Jynil: Well, St. Clare is close [E: yep, it's close]
179 just have to get my touchie up a little earlier [*laughing*].
180 You know, and that's the way I made it work, too is [*laughing*],
181 I hate to say this,
182 but part of the reason that I wanted to join the Catholic faith,
183 not only my my par- my grandparents on both sides [M: oh] are deacons [M: wow]
184   and or lay ministers [M: mmhmm],
185 so there's that huge Roman Catholic tradition in my family,
186 so that's a drive, kinda was a driving force of [M: right] deciding,
187 but, and my mom's influence 'cause she is so, so, so very Catholic and [M: hmm]
188 um, but the Catholic masses are during the week days [M: yes]
189 and once again, understanding the dynamics of my family and [M: yep] where I'm at [M: yep]
190   I thought, "Well, hey, I can go to an early Mass during the w[eek]-,"
191 and I did it [M: right]
192 all the time when I was going through RCIA, um [M: yep],
193 you know, two or three days a week I would be,
194 and, yeah, OK, I know you're supposed to go on Sunday,
195 but I made it work for me [*laughing*] [M: right, right], you know.

196 Marcia: That's huge.

197 Jynil: mmhmm [M: mmhmm]

198 Marcia: Other faith communities aren't as flexible with those service times. [E: That's true. M: Mmhmm. Yup.
199 Wow. . . . Well, let's see, another value you, um, you talked about community in what you wrote,
200 and you said something to the effect of both of you value improving the community,
201 and I just wondered a little bit more about that.
202 I've heard some already,
203 but, you know, how would you, um, describe "improving,"
204 how would you describe "community."
205 What does that look like for each of you? . . . or for both of you?   **1:00:37**

Narrative as Recursive Discourse: The Friends Return to This Key Scene

Interview #2: 43:31 (of 1:37:13)

1 Jynil: . . .I tend to talk too much [*laughing*]. Right?

2 Erica: But I did, I did tell her, well now, just because, you know, people, they always gotta put
3   their spin on it,
4 . . . and I remember I did say, "Do not share," because people, they, they do!
5 . . . [T]hey're [J: *laughter*] very judgmental. [M: yup]

6 Jynil: I have learned that lesson, by the way. [E: Yeah, they're very judgmental]
7 Erica's one of the few people I tell about

8 Marcia: about choosing your audience

9 Jynil: I tell about, yeah.
10 I've learned that lesson well, I really have, but, um, you know,
11 Erica took a different spin with it and said, you know,
12 "Well," you know, especially with like, the, the uh, the church thing, when I started going
13   to church and taking my lessons for . . . the RCIA program and all of those things, um,
14   it was a hard time, man.
15 [A significant family member] was on me constantly, it was,
16 he had a very, very hard time with it,
17 he didn't, he made it well known, you know,
18 and I made the mistake of like talking to [another friend] about it, like one or two other people,
19 and they just felt it was horrible,
20 whereas Erica took the approach of, "Well, this isn't at his, at his comfort level," and,
21 you know, "Everything will be OK," and all, you know,
22 he's, you know, "He does a lot of good things too" [M: yeah, mmhmm]

23 Erica: Find, find a way to do it in a way that works for you, . . .

24 Jynil: Right, she was very supportive of the fact that I found a way that wouldn't impact [a
25   significant family member]. [M: Right, uh, huh, yup]
26 You know, like . . . I found somebody that was actually willing to the RCIA lessons at lunch time,
27   close to where I work.
28 I went to church in the morning, during the week,
29 and I know you're, supposed to go on Sunday, but, you know,
30 I make it work.

31 Erica: It's just lookin' at it from a different perspective, instead of, you know, always puttin' your
32   two cents, and say what you wouldn't do . . . and
33 it's like, you don't know what you'd do, you really don't.
34 And, you know, you have to, people have to operate in their life and, you know, the frame of their
35   life, you know, . . .

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36  Jynil:  and while, you know, a lot of individuals can be your friend,
37  it takes a real friend to get all of that,
38  not many, not many people really get all of that  [M:  yep]
39  and we're very, you know, we're gonna work it out no matter what.          46:00
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In terms of Labov's narrative grammar (Labov & Waletzky, 1967; Labov, 1972, 1981), ironically, our server provides the abstract for the narrative of the research process, which is the setting for Erica and Jynil's narrative about Catholic confirmation. As an outsider to both the research process and the Catholic confirmation, our server is an unlikely candidate to offer an abstract. But she is an interested and skilled observer, a long-time employee at the local grill where the three of us met for lunch. Her accent indicates that English is not her first language. Our server and I know each other, since I am a fairly regular customer. On the occasion of the first interview with Erica and Jynil, she repeatedly engaged us in conversation. The abstract for the narrative of the research process arose when asked if we "ladies" were "working together?" (l. 73[26]). Indeed we were, not just on a university project, but in our conversation we were doing relational and identity work as well.   Her simple question serves as a fitting summary of our narrative interaction.

Several possible barriers–complicating action, if you will–might have derailed this work. When we showed up at our first choice restaurant, we found that it was closed on Mondays, so we moved quickly to Plan B–an alternative restaurant nearby. The relational work was also nearly derailed by barriers that Erica and Jynil did not know about. I had lost a contact lens that morning and felt very out of sorts about proceeding with this important interview in glasses rather than

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[26]All line numbers in parenthetical references in this section (up to Table 6.1) refer to quotations from the first transcript excerpt for "The Best Night."

contacts. I was very self-conscious and somewhat disoriented (not being able to see as well with glasses as with contacts). My disorientation was most evident to me when I didn't hear Jynil say, "We are of different religions" (l. 9) early in "The Best Night" narrative, so later (l. 63) I tried to clarify that Erica was Catholic, and she had to correct me. In addition, repeatedly during the narrative of "The Best Night," I found myself distracted from listening by my internal dialogue. Repeatedly I asked myself if I, like Erica, would have been able to support a friend so unswervingly in her quest to become confirmed in a faith other than my own. Serving as a supportive listener on the sidelines, yes. Intervening as an advocate and surrogate family member? Hmm, probably not, I thought to myself as the friends unfolded their tale. The internal dialogue was intense enough that it could easily have become a distraction to good listening. Perhaps in the moment, it was. But as I repeatedly listened to the recording and divided the transcript into clauses, I very often heard and saw my "mmhmm" at the end of those clauses. Whatever was going on inside my head, with vocal backchanneling I was engaged. With all due respect to Jynil's Catholicism and Erica's Islam, I was performing a quiet version of a Traditional Black Church "Amen Corner," the front row where Smitherman (2006) says that "lively expressions of feeling and support for a speaker or performer" take place (p. 21). The resolution of the narrative of the research process is that the process opened a discursive space for the friends to co-construct a mutually affirming narrative. In effect, the resolution of one narrative (of the research process) is another narrative: "The Best Night." As the friends conclude "The Best Night," I provide a statement that assesses both the resolution of the research process and the resolution of The Best

Night. Realizing how many barriers might have stood in the way of both narratives, in relief and pleasure, I conclude, "What a great story. Amazing" (l. 164).

The abstract of this mutually affirming narrative, "The Best Night," was chosen by Erica and Jynil in Our Friendship Story, the initial stage of the research. One of the prompts in Our Friendship Story asked for a key scene that, in their opinion, was "a high point" in their relationship. The friends wrote that a high point was "going through the process of Catholic confirmation and being together through that." Several events of complicating action might have derailed a joyful resolution for the friends. Certainly Jynil's struggle to find a Catholic parish that would work with her (on week days, during work hours, with a marriage to a non-Catholic) delayed the success of Jynil's quest. Even though Jynil's family is traditionally Catholic, a significant family member was not supportive. However, although Jynil and Erica "are of different religions" (l. 9), the friends were able to have constructive discussions about faith (ll. 75-81, 83-85, 91-93), eventually affirming Jynil in her desire to become a Catholic. Interestingly, in the process of recalling these discussions, Erica identifies so completely with her friend that she uses reported speech that speaks in Jynil's voice:

Erica: . . . It really did help you, I think, I mean, in terms of being able to solidify,
"This is what I believe [M: yes]
and this is why this works for me," [you know, you know

Marcia: [Wow.

Erica: spiritually, culturally, religiously, this is why this works for me." (ll. 79-83)

In the interactive moment, Erica actually performs her friend using first person pronouns.

Despite delay and potential derailment in the complicating action, the resolution of this narrative is positive. Erica and their mutual friend Jody, who is Jewish, attend Jynil's Catholic confirmation on Easter Eve. They surprise her, and Jynil cries. Together the friends have endured and triumphed in the narrative rope trick, "from terra firma to terra incognita and back" (Nair, 2003, p. 16). Their mutual endurance has affirmed and deepened their friendship.

Indeed, their mutual sense of the resolution of this narrative is dramatic. In lines 95-106, the interaction is rapid, obviously co-constructed, with frequent simultaneous and overlapping speech. The two friends converge in their assessment of the resolution. The confirmation ceremony was "the best night" (l. 101), Jynil says at the height of the discursive excitement. Beyond the interactive moment of greatest engagement (ll. 95-106), the friends reiterate: The evening of the confirmation was "fantastic" (Erica, l. 122), "great" (Erica, ll. 131, 145-6, 162), "amazing" (Jynil, l. 130), and "wonderful" (Jynil, l. 163). The priest–who they both agree is Polish–was also "great" (Erica, l. 144). No wonder, then, that I concur with the friends' sense of the resolution when I say, "What a great story. Amazing" (l. 164).

A table will help to illustrate the complex grammar of narrative co-construction analyzed thus far:

Table 6.1

Narrative Strand	Abstract	Complicating Action	Resolution/Assessment of Resolution	Evaluation
Narrative of the Research Process	Server: "ladies working together" (1, l. 73)	*We started out at a closed restaurant. Marcia felt disconcerted in her glasses. Marcia didn't catch that the two friends were "of different religions" (1, l. 9). Marcia faced an internal struggle, wondering if she would be able to support a friend as Erica did.*	*The research process provided a space for the friends to co-construct a mutually affirming narrative.* Marcia: "What a great story. Amazing" (1, l. 64).	*Despite the challenges of the complicating action, Marcia offered affirmative listening, evidenced in part by the regular backchanneling (e.g., "mmhmm"). The friends evaluated the process by co-narrating The Best Night.*
Requested Narrative: "The Best Night"	Marcia: request for "a high point" (OFS) Jynil and Erica: "going through the process of Catholic confirmation and being together through that" (their "high point" in OFS)	*Jynil's significant family member did not support her. Jynil struggled to find a Catholic parish that would work with her.* Jynil: The friends are "of different religions," (1, l. 9) *but were able to talk through what Jynil wanted* (Erica, 1, ll. 75-81)	Jynil: "the best night" (1, l. 102)–*when Erica and a mutual friend who is Jewish attended Jynil's Catholic confirmation* Erica: "It was so fantastic . . . . it was great" (1, ll. 106-7). Jynil: "Yeah, it was, it was" (1, l. 109). Erica: "It was a great service" (1, l. 145).	Jynil: Erica "supported me by being there" (1, ll. 11, 114) Erica: Jynil "was very persistent" (1, ll. 17, 25) and has "a lot of perseverance" (1, l. 49). Jynil: "We're gonna work it out, no matter what" (2, l. 39).

Interestingly, the resolution (the confirmation service) of "The Best Night" took place in a location in metro Detroit that is not the usual "turf" for either friend. In the transcript above, just after more emotive reiteration about the confirmation service, I initiate a bit of additional orientation (1, l. 132), asking about the location of the parish that confirmed Jynil. (This is a recursive move that I regretted later, realizing that I had taken the agenda away from the emotion of the friends and instead drawn attention toward one of my own fact-finding projects: learning about the faith communities in the social landscape of Detroit. However, additional analysis allowed me to recognize that the friends enjoyed this part of the narrative as well, providing

interesting information about their perceptions of this particular parish.) When the friends reply,

they describe a parish that is not in the township where Jynil lives, nor in Stanley, where Erica

lives. Instead, the parish that earned their high praise is located in an exurban area at a point

between their two homes. Though metro Detroit is sprawling and boundary-riddled, a determined

individual like Jynil can find a safe space for accomplishing a personal goal, and a boundary-

bridging friend like Erica can join her at the social/geographic location that Jynil has made her

own.

Turning to consideration of the evaluation–which Riessman (2008) says is a moment when

the "narrator steps back from the action" and provides her/his sense of "the 'soul' of the

narrative" (p. 84)–we find a complex web of negotiated meaning-making and identity work in

"The Best Night." In my opening prompt for this narrative, I offer a possible evaluation: I

wonder aloud if the confirmation story might be about the mutual "shared value" of "faith in your

friendship" (1, ll. 3-6). While the friends do not refute this relational hypothesis (Jynil says that

the friends are "both spiritual people" (1, l. 7)), the ensuing interaction makes clarifies that the

ultimate evaluation of this narrative is deeper; it is less about specific values and more about

identity, both individual and relational.

Before launching into the particulars of the narrative (including details of orientation and

events of complicating action), Jynil tells me what her evaluation is: Erica "supported me by

being there" (1, ll. 10-11).   She states the evaluation another way once most of the narrative has

played out: Erica "was always there for me" (l. 114), even when a significant family member

could not be.   During the second interview, Jynil reiterates: Erica "was very supportive" (2, l. 24)

in Jynil's quest to find a Catholic parish that would work with her. For Jynil, "the 'soul' of the narrative" (Riessman, 2008, p. 84) is the affirmation of her friend's supportiveness.   Jynil is making an identify claim for her friend: "Erica is supremely supportive." Erica, for her part, affirms this identity work. She says of Jynil's confirmation quest, "I wanted to support it, I thought it was fantastic, you know, it was important [M: yeah]. It was very important" (ll. 58-61).

Furthermore, directly following the friends' discursive co-construction of "The Best Night," a long portion of our conversation is devoted to Erica's determination to showcase[27] her friend on the subject of community values.   Referring to one of the friends' responses in Our Friendship Story, I ask about how

both of you value improving the community, and I just wondered a little bit more about that. I've heard some already, but, you know, how would you, um, describe "improving," how would you describe "community." What does that look like for each of you? . . . or for both of you?
(Interview #1, ll. 995-999)

For several minutes thereafter, Erica dominates the conversation, speaking rapidly and effusively about how her friend lives out community values.   At one point she describes Jynil's compassion and commitment to the community this way:

[W]e both are very compassionate, I mean, Jynil, I'll, I'll have to be honest with you, um, she embodies compassion, I mean, she lives it. I talk it, I think it, I support it, but she lives it . . . and I mean that in a lot of ways . . . . Jynil over the years, they have taken more people in their household than, than anybody. . . . . [T]hese are people that people would throw away. I mean, honestly, these are the people in society nobody want to be bothered with. She and her husband take them in, treat them with dignity, help them in any kind of way, shape or form, um, and they do it out, with love, you know . . . . [P]eople don't do that, you know, Jynil's always volunteered, even while working and, and like I said, I may volunteer. I volunteer, but I'm not inviting people in . . . . She, she makes a difference in, you know, somebody's future.   **(Interview #1, ll. 1017-1028)**

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[27]For the idea of one friend "showcasing" another in this instance, I am indebted to David Boromisza-Habashi, Assistant Professor at the University of Colorado, Boulder.

Erica takes this and other lengthy turns in conversation in order to illustrate the admirable personal qualities and community commitment of her friend (more on this in a moment), but she is doing identity work for herself as well as for Jynil. In a context where many people would become embarrassed at such lavish praise, Jynil's nonverbal affect was serene. My interpretation of this interaction is that Erica's praise is simply another manifestation of what Jynil had just told me in "The Best Night": My friend Erica is *very* supportive.

The co-constructed evaluation of "The Best Night" offers affirming identity work for Jynil as well. Erica affirms Jynil early and often. She says that the quest for Catholic confirmation illustrated for her that Jynil is "very persistent" (1, l. 17) and "extremely persistent" (1, l. 25). Erica elaborates on Jynil's persistence:

I mean, there was [M: amazing] a lot of perseverance.
I mean, there really was a lot of perseverance [M: wow],
        and, you know, making it work, making it work even in the face of
"No, no, can't do this, can't do that, can't do."
It would have been so easy for somebody to say,
"Number one, this must not be the right faith for me 'cause you're not welcoming."
She was very committed, I mean, and just
"I'm gonna find a way to find a 'yes,'"
that's just kinda [M: perseverance] that's who she is [M: uh, huh]. (1, ll. 48-56)

Jynil seems to need to hear reiterations of this message. She does not readily own it. At one point, she offers a disparaging bit of identity work: "I'm a wimp" (1, l. 150). Erica, with uncharacteristic brevity, replies, "No" (1, l. 151). At last, Jynil offers her verbal assent to Erica's positive sense of her identity. In line 196 Jynil incorporates the diction we heard from Erica in line 50 ("making it work, making it work") when she says of her successful Catholic confirmation:

"I made it work for me." She reaffirms and globalizes the identity work in the second interview when she says, "I make it work" (2, l. 30).

Jynil also provides a statement of evaluation of "The Best Night" that illustrates how this narrative does *relational* identity work in addition to individual identity work. As they co-construct this story, the friends are showing me what their relationship is about. On the surface, it's about religious discussion and an Easter mass, but below the surface it's about friends who are deeply committed to one another and share the perception that they solve problems together. In the second interview, Jynil talks about how Erica helped her reframe her resistant family member's attitude and supported her throughout her challenging quest. She concludes, "While, you know, a lot of individuals can be your friend, it takes a real friend to get all of that . . . . Not many people really get all of that" (2, ll. 36-38). Earlier, as just noted, she said about herself, "I make it work" (2, l. 30). Now she applies this language to the friendship: "[W]e're very, you know, we're gonna work it out no matter what" (2, l. 39). If "The Best Night" is any indication, I think they will.

"The Best Night," considered through the lens of narrative grammar, reveals much about how Erica and Jynil perceive each other and their relationship. We see them using a "third party" space in metro Detroit (the parish location in Shelby Township) and a "third party" to their relationship–me as the researcher–to display dramatic and significant individual and relational identity work. They use my proposed evaluation that faith is a "shared value that's quite strong for you" (1, ll. 5-6) as a foil to co-construct a narrative that offers the mutual affirmation of perseverance and support that they consider to be hallmarks of one another and of their friendship.

Their narrative illustrates the shared face (Goffman, 1967) of optimism and mutuality that, in their sense of things, makes the relationship worth their investment of time and effort.

To return to the conversation that began this chapter–about the yellow friendship–when Jynil says, "[W]e've gotten a lot from each other" (l. 15), "The Best Night" surely illustrates her point. In the yellow friendship conversation, the friends also use my one of my ideas as a foil. I offer the thought that perhaps theirs is after all a "grey" friendship–and, starting with Erica, they co-construct consensus on their "yellow" friendship. Erica does not agree with Jynil's initial response about a "grey" friendship, but she agrees that they get "a lot from each other":

> Our goal is always to get to the other side of good, you know, if anything's goin' on–not that we don't talk about problems . . . but we always try to look at the up side, and that is definitely something we have in common. We try to, if there's a problem, you know, we try to find . . . a solution or a way of copin' with it. That's just kinda something we have in common, and we encourage each other.
> (Interview #2, ll. 29-33)

Erica and Jynil: a black friend and a white friend. But mostly, yellow friends.

VII. JEAN AND CANDACE

Jean (L) and Candace (photo provided by the friends)

Marcia: The title that you gave your story was "The Zebra Experience." I'm wondering why you chose that title. Do you think it's still good? Anything about that title.

Candace: I think it had more snap than Ebony and Ivory, and somebody used that already anyway.

Jean: Also, you know, . . . the zebra is one, . . . but the white and black never bleed into each other. It is distinctly white in this area and black in this.

Candace: Yet all are one creature.

Jean: I have to look at the hind part of the zebra. I hope it's white.

Candace: . . . [All: *laughter*] The ass end is white. Thank you very much! [All: *laughter*]

Jean: I have to get one up . . . since you can switcheroo, I have to look for it some place, but, yeah, . . . it's not a blend, and yet, we share gender, we share close to age even though I'm the oldest, we share . . . [C: similar life experiences] yeah, similar life experiences, so yeah, I think so.

Candace: I think it's still appropriate, and, yes, the white and black are separate, but they are together. It's sorta like that Kahlil Gibran thing, you know, when people fall in love, . . . it's the two trees that are together but separate . . . . You know what I'm saying [M: mmhmm, mmhmm, yup].

Jean: And one doesn't over[shadow the other one.

Candace: [shadow the other, right, so. . . . . I still like it.

(Interview #1, ll. 938-45, 947-58)

Introduction

Even as Candace and Jean "overshadow" one another in nearly simultaneous speech, they "never bleed into each other," in the sense that they are respectful of each other's identities, intelligence, and personal boundaries. Not that most any topic isn't possible ground for humor. Since Candace can "switcheroo" (i.e., feature her Scottish identity or her Lebanese identity, depending on which plays to best advantage), Jean feels justified in getting "one up," joking that she hopes the ass end of their friendship zebra is white. Hilarity is always possible just around the bend–in this case, the bend of the next turn of speech between these two friends. They laugh freely and loudly (accentuated by the echo in the large, empty dining room reserved for our interviews at a Detroit restaurant owned by people I know). Jean is especially animated–slapping her hand on the table, snapping her fingers, and punctuating her narration with expressive nonverbal vocal sounds.   Indeed, as detailed in the following section, humor is one of the communicatively co-constructed "provisions of friendship" (Rawlins, 2008, p. 230) that Candace and Jean offer to one another.

Jean and Candace met seven years before their research participation. At that time, they were both enrolled in an undergraduate course at Wayne State University in Detroit. After a slow start in their acquaintance (that they will narrate below) the friends quickly progressed to a stage "when we were both on campus together we'd make time to at least grab a cup of coffee . . . and then we were mutually supportive academically in terms of reading and editing one another's work" (Candace, Interview #1, ll. 489-92). The friends also realized that they shared a socio-economic background and a common experience of success and travel in the private sector. Lively

intellectual discussion has been their staple while Candace finished her B.A. and M.A. and while Jean has worked on her Ph.D. Now that Candace is teaching at a suburban campus, they no longer share an academic "home turf," so the friends get together at one another's homes, restaurants, and social events. Since travel distance tends to be significant, Candace typically drives to Jean's home, and then they ride together, since Jean's car is what the friends call a "hoop-dee" or "Flintmobile"–their colorful code for an unreliable vehicle (and, by the way, the lack of an expensive car is part of the "Bohemian" lifestyle that Jean says she is embracing). The friends talk about many mutual acquaintances; they also told me about an especially significant time when Candace picked up Jean from the airport shortly after Candace's husband's death and another especially memorable experience baking Christmas cookies. They give and take "orders" for birthday gifts. In matters both cerebral and mundane, Candace and Jean are deeply connected as friends.

Communicative Co-Construction of Friendship

Humor, Metadiscourse, Identity Talk

Jean and Candace tell the narrative about how they met with characteristic good humor. They call this meeting "The Encounter." (Jean and Candace seemed to enjoy the part in Our Friendship Story in which they were asked to give chapter titles to the seasons of their friendship. They chose colorful titles such as "Life After Death," "Shall We Dance?", and "UPS Rings Twice.") Jean initiates this narrative during our first interview:

Jean: Oh, did we ever talk about Chapter 1, "The Encounter"?

Marcia: No.

Candace: Oh, our initial meeting?

Marcia: . . . . I'd love to hear it. [M & C: *laughter*] . . . [lines 611-623 omitted]

Candace: . . . My recall of this [J: mmhmm] meeting?

Jean: Mmhmm, and then I'll add my impression.

Candace: OK. Well, . . . [W]e're taking this really crappy class from a really crappy instructor, and, . . . [s]o we are smokers, so we would go downstairs because this was a three-hour class, wasn't it? [J: yeah] So we'd go have smoke breaks.
    "Hi, I'm Candace!" and Jean kinda went, "I'm Jean." She was very reserved. [M: yeah] You know, and I'm like this perky little girl; it's my first semester at a big university. "Woo, I'm so excited!" and she's lookin' at me like, [*laughter*]

Jean: She's got these black tights on and a plaid skirt [C: I did?] and a black sweater. Yeah! Yeah!

Marcia: She looked too put-together.

Jean: I mean, she was like, "whooh."

Candace: I had my kilt on?

Jean: Yeah.

Candace: Oh, I was taking a speech class, and I think it was a day that I had a speech scheduled, and so I was doing it on my Scottish heritage. [*laughter*]

Jean: [*sarcastically mimicking Candace*] " I'm not Lebanese, I'm Scottish." [*laughter*] . . .

Candace: Oh, gee, I can pick and choose what I wanna be at any given moment, you know.

Jean: That's right, you certainly can.

Candace: So there. So and that's how I remember the first encounter. Less than warm and fuzzy from her side. [M: OK]

Jean: . . . I just wondered: She talked [*laughter*], she talked, and talked, and I wondered, "What does she want?" [All: *laughter*] "What does she want?" And she was like the kid that has decided, "I am going to be your friend, I don't care."

Candace: "I don't care if you don't like me, I'm gonna be your friend."

Jean: So every class, "Hi, Jean!" it's like [*sound indicating Jean's discomfort with Candace*], and finally I said, "Oh, just deal with it, Jean. Deal with it." And, you know, it turned out to be very pleasant, and rewarding, and engaging, but initially this, "Hi! I'm Candace!" was like, "Boy, are we at the friendship convention? Where are we?" . . .

Candace: Ah, geez.

Marcia: So did you get the vibe from her, like, "Oh, dear, this person wants me to back off" ? . . .

Candace: Oh, I did, but I guess I didn't back off.

(Interview #1, ll. 607-10, 624-8, 633-47, 650-62, 666-9)

Clearly, besides humor, these friends freely share in explicit identity talk. They persevere with one another, in this case, despite Candace's overzealous friendliness and Jean's initial wariness. Their frank assessment of each other's discursive behavior can be disarming; for my part, I found that it was both refreshing and discomfiting. I laughed with the friends about the perky black and white kilt, but also remembered a time when I "tried too hard" to make a friend.

The way that the friends talk about their talk in the interaction above highlights their ability to engage in metadiscourse, an ability that sounds too skillful to be occasional. It sounds habitual, rather than a discursive option that the friends exercise only in the rare experience of interview research. If my hunch is correct, such metadiscursive collaboration is a significant provision of their friendship. In the excerpt above, Candace says she relentlessly tried to engage Jean in conversation; Jean concurs. Candace says that Jean kept aloof in the conversation; Jean describes the turning point when she started to engage in dialogue. Near the end of the narrative, I feel comfortable enough about the metadiscourse that I prompt them to take it a step further: "So did you get the vibe from her, like, "Oh, dear, this person wants me to back off"? Jean's response indicates that even third parties are welcome in the metadiscursive dance of these friends.

Metadiscourse, Empathetic Listening

Another notable example metadiscourse as a provision of friendship–one that confirms my hunch about the habitual practice of metadiscourse–occurs when the friends unpack their typical approaches to problems. When a problem needs to be addressed, Candace's default is analysis:

What are the components and how might they be rearranged or repaired in order to achieve better results? Jean says what she typically wants when affronted by an overwhelming problem–and what she gives when others have such a problem–is affirmation and empathetic listening. Compassion, for Jean, has a metaphor, and that metaphor is a comfort food: a bacon, lettuce and tomato sandwich. She puts it this way:

Every now and then I will experience something that I don't want fixed. I want to be stroked. I want to be nurtured. My grandmother would do things like, [*slaps hand on table*] "You're the best person in the world; would you like a bacon, lettuce and tomato sandwich?" And [M: yeah] every now and then I'll encounter something, and I'm looking for that. [M: sure, the bacon, lettuce, and tomato sandwich]

Candace: [And, and the love and, and the support it represents [M: exactly].   (Interview #1, ll. 698-702)

Candace, whom Jean calls, "my dear friend, the fixer" (ll. 703-4), tries to overcome her analytic default, but she finds it difficult. She explains:

And so I talked about my take on it: My perception of Jean is that she's very strong and very capable, and that she doesn't want people to go, "Oh, Jean, it's gonna be OK," when she really does, and [J: sometimes] and that, yes, and then the fact that sometimes it unsettles me when I see the vulnerable side of her because I perceive her as being so strong and capable.
(Interview #1, ll. 737-41)

The two friends have talked about their talk enough times that they have come to a kind of discursive understanding. Without needing Jean to wave a "BLT" card, Candace is more apt to offer empathy. Jean's empathetic listening after the death of Candace's husband seems to have been a turning point. The friends talk about how Jean quietly let the grief be what it was–ragged and seemingly endless, and that was what Candace needed. Candace says afterward,

But she was plugged into that about me, and then when challenges are presented to her that she just needs somebody to make her a bacon lettuce and tomato sandwich, I wasn't gettin' it. I get it better now. But I'm still uncomfortable [J: yeah] by not seeing something useful in the course of those exchanges.   (Interview #1, ll. 777-80)

Candace still uses the language of industry ("she was plugged into that"), but she has become more at peace with offering the bacon, lettuce and tomato sandwich. Through metadiscourse, the friends have arrived at an understanding–at a certain reciprocity of perspective taking and empathetic listening–that guides their future discourse.

<div align="center">Featured Narrative: "Le Car"</div>

The friends' metadiscourse, humor, identity work, and more are interwoven in the featured narrative of this chapter, "Le Car." Many narrative strands resolve in diverse ways, creating an embroidery of individual and relational identity work that is significant for the friends, for me as their conversation partner, and even for our social context in metro Detroit. Labov's (Labov & Waletzky, 1967; Labov, 1972, 1981) narrative grammar is especially helpful in seeing how the friends co-construct meaning-making in this complex narrative; a series of tables will tease out the work of the narrative strands.

The Le Car narrative is remarkable, first of all, for its early entrance during our first interview. Barely a minute had passed, and I was just getting my bearings about how the friends completed Our Friendship Story and debriefing them on their perceptions of that initial stage of the research. My expectation was that this opening part of the interview could take several minutes, but the friends took over the interaction, choosing to co-construct a narrative before I requested it. And Le Car is not light fare. In many ways, it is a challenging narrative to tell and to hear. It exposes vulnerabilities of both of the friends and of their friendship. It is not a tidy package, cheerfully wrapped. It was a true gift to me as a researcher, however, offering rich

insights about how these friends communicatively construct friendship across a racial divide in metro Detroit.

How did such a narrative occur so early in the first interview? Tentative explanations arise out of the provisions that the friends typically offer one another and out of the narrative of the research process. Candace and Jean are feminist intellectuals who characteristically engage in identity work. To illustrate, at one point after narrating the Le Car incident, the friends describe a conflict with a mutual acquaintance, who is white.

Candace: And this person thinks that, like, I'm on her side. [M: oh, sure] 'cause we look sorta look the same, and I'm goin', "You know what? We don't have a lot in common." [M: yeah] [*speaking to Jean*] Because in spite of my whiteness, I come from the same, pretty much the same economic background that you do. [J: mmhmm; M: hmm, interesting] So we have similar life experiences by virtue of social class, certainly not similar life experiences as relates to who society treats its various members, but . . . .

Marcia: Wow. That's very interesting, you . . . speak the academic language together and with me, and I appreciate your kinda helping me write my dissertation because most people don't tease this out, you know, and it's just because it's not part of their background that they tease out all the different inflections of, um, race and class and gender and, you know, how those intersect with each other and sometimes how they're different strands, so, that's really good.

Candace: Well, you [know

Jean: [We have no other vocabulary [*laughing*] at this point . . . .

Marcia: Yeah, you can't go back. That's true. [C: no] Yep.

Candace: And, uh, yeah, and I mean just, we've, we've been through undergrad together. She kicked me and kicked me regarding my Master's, and so I'm trying to kick her and kick her regarding her doctorate, . . . and we do research, . . . and we hopefully have some insights that civilians, and I don't say that in an unkind way, but that civilians don't have about social life and social forces [M: right] and that kinda stuff.

Jean: I want one of your artichokes. Thanks. You know I love these.

Candace: I know you do.   **(Interview #1, ll. 250-64, 266-74)**

The intellectual camaraderie of the friends is amazing. It is colored with both the toughness of

blue-collar Detroit (as the friends, in Candace's description, "kick" each other through the hoops

of academia) and the ease of chatting over a lunch entree that features artichokes.

Furthermore, Le Car probably arose early in the first interview because of the "story of the

story"–the narrative of the research process. Le Car was simmering from the first moments of our

research interaction. In order to explain the research process, sign consent forms, and hand over

the Our Friendship Story paper work, I met with the friends at a Starbuck's they chose on Wayne

State's campus. I kept my long winter coat on, not wanting to impose on the time of the friends.

But after Candace and Jean signed the consent forms, they clearly wanted to engage me in one of

their favorite topics: the social/cultural landscape of Detroit. The conversation arose so quickly

and spontaneously that when I wrote my field note, I couldn't even remember who started it. The

friends asked me where I lived, and when I told them, Jean quickly said something like, "I'd *never*

live in Grosse Pointe!" The friends discussed the reputations of various communities: Grosse

Pointe, Warren, Detroit, the Wayne State campus, and more. Clearly, they knew the geographic

and social boundaries and the contested racial history of metro Detroit. I was a rapt listener and

occasional contributor regarding the social terrain that these "native Detroiters" (a term that

Candace used once for the friends) knew well and that I had been attempting to understand as a

newcomer. Jean, especially, pulled no discursive punches. She was adamant that she would never

live in Grosse Pointe (knowing the racial history), even when Candace tried to tell her that the

racial climate there had changed a bit. Jean talked about Detroit's problem with "Tyrone," which I

assumed was the collective code term for thugs. For her part, Candace told me about her

neighborhood (in the "cheap seats" in the suburb of Worthy), where a neighbor with a gun was unhappy about a few "people of color" (Candace's term in this context) moving into the neighborhood.

At last, despite the engaging conversation, I made my departure, and then the friends stayed together for three more hours to work on Our Friendship Story. I can only assume that the simmering on social landscape and identity continued, no matter what the specific question called for in Our Friendship Story. In terms of narrative grammar, the friends and I had already received our abstract and orientation to the research process, and the friends decided we were ready–at the very start of the first interview–for some complicating action. LeCar had simmered enough, and here is how the friends told it:

Interview #1: 0:0:53 (of 1:35:36)

1 Marcia: Alright, and you did a three hour lunch.

2 Candace: Yeah.

3 Marcia: Wow. Good, and I hope it was a good time.

4 Jean: Oh, it was.

5 Candace: It was! [M: OK]
6 And actually, um, we talked about some things that probably had been, not festering,
7 that sounds very negative, but some stuff that was beneath the surface,
8 that was good for us, I think, um,
9 so it was a good thing.

10 Marcia: OK. Um, actually the first official question has to do with kind of a debriefing, um, could
11 you talk a little bit more about what was, um, a really good time, or fun, or not
12   so fun, not such a good time, maybe therapeutic, as you say, but not necessarily, um,
13   easy,

14 Candace: In the course of that discussion?

15 Marcia: Mmhmm, yup.

16 Jean: I think if you look at the low point, that, that was when it got, mmm, little serious and, yeah,
17 this, this is, uh, significant when you look at friendships between women, man and a woman of a
18   different racial background, uh,
19 and it, it, and we've done this repeatedly throughout this relationship,
20 it wasn't the first time, um,
21 but what it was about was my perception that things that I would bring up or present to
22   Candace that dealt with race,
23 it's like, "I don't wanna look at this,
24 I don't wanna talk about this,
25 I don't wanna see this."
26 And specifically, I had given her Sugrue's book on the origins of unrest [M: I've read that, yeah] in
27   Detroit
28 and Candace did live in Detroit for awhile as a youngster,
29 so it sorta chronicles what happened, the migration pattern,
30 and I thought, "Wow. We both lived in the city.
31 We're both x number of years older.
32 I'm the oldest,
33 and we would be able to look at this and talk about it."
34 Candace never read the book!
35 And I was like, "What is up with you?"
36 and, and part of it is my frustration on a much larger scale of getting people to understand this,
37   this concept that white is normal.
38 And that once you know that, you don't need to know any more!
39 And it's the area in our friendship that we still sorta [*nonverbal expressing uneasiness*],
40   go back and forth
41 because when Candace invites me to anything I'm the only one who looks like me!

42 Candace: and your comment regarding that, um, just recently was "I"--this is Jean--"I
43   have lots of white friends.
44 Am I your only black friend?" [*laughing*]
45 And the truthful answer is yes!
46 Um, that's yes,
47 I mean, I don't have anything else to say about it
48 nor do I feel compelled to defend it or anything,
49 but the reality is she is my only black friend.
50 I know black people, certainly,
51 but she's my only black person in my friendship circle [M: sure].
52 So, but she has lots of white friends.
53 And so "What's wrong with that picture?" is what she says to me, you know,
54 or just "Why is this so different between you and I?"
55 Not judging what's wrong with this picture, but this is different.
56 "I have lots of white friends,
57 you only have one black friend.

58 What's up with that?"

59 Marcia: Right, right. So the process of working through these questions brought you into that,
60   um, kind of cutting or growing edge of the relationship.

61 Candace: This, the low point that we noted there was regarding this, the car issue? [M: yeah]
62 and that's where I manifested that whole assumption of white normalness
63   without really being aware of it.
64 Part of it is I'm a control freak.
65 Then that crosses all color lines,
66 but part of it, certainly, you know, if I'm honest in the discussion between Jean and I and with you,
67 part of it is my deeply embodied notions about white and black . . .
68 "Oh, Jean, you can't know anything about this!
69 You're just this poor little black girl.
70 I'll fix it for you!"

71 Jean: Plus the assumption Candace is a gear-head,
72 a car is very important to Candace,[M: uh-huh] how it looks, how it drives, everything.

73 Candace: I'm a product of Detroit, [what can I

74 Marcia: [Yeah, oh yeah [*laughing*]

75 Candace: and an engineer dad

76 Jean: I'm a product of Detroit, married to an engineer,
77 we could care less about an automobile!
78 We could care less about the symbols [M: mmhmm, sure]
79 and this is our perception, the symbols of being middle-class and successful.
80 I don't care!
81 So Le Car in the vernacular of black folks was a hoop-dee,
82   meaning that it was close to being a Flintstone-mobile.

83 Candace: [*laughing*] Put your feet on the floor!

84 Jean: I mean it was, it was really tragic to Candace that I would even have this car,
85 and for me, it was, [*whistle of approval*] "I don't have a car note,
86 I'm not payin' through the nose for insurance." [*snap of fingers*] Bang.
87 Where am I going in this city anyway?
88 I mean, Detroit is where I live at this moment,
89 but I am not wedded to this area.
90 I really don't like it.
91 I'm just here. [C: right]
92 And the minute I can get out of here, color me gone!
93 It's, it's too provincial,

94 it's, it's too polarized,
95 it's too caught up in what I call conspicuous consumption that projects this image
96   with very little behind it.

97 Candace: It's like a, a set for a movie.
98 It's just flats, you know, [J: yeah!]
99 like, you think about Blazing Saddles and the city that they built,
100 they were just flats,
101 there was nothin' behind 'em.

102 Jean: Exactly! So people run around with the latest automobile and the latest,
103 and also Candace is one,
104 if it's new [*snaps fingers*] she has got to have it.

105 Candace: I'm a marketer's dream. [M: *laughter*]

106 Jean: And I'm that one that, "Does what I have work? Yeah," well, so I mean, from your
107   perspective . . .

108 Candace: I s-, I saw all, sorta saw all those things
109   through my lens of "Gee, the car needs repair,
110 it's unsafe at any speed" was part of my concern about it, you know,
111 so there was a certain degree of altruism and concern for your bodily safety and all that.
112 [To Server: Thank you. That's gorgeous. It's a lot. Yowzer. Thanks! . . .]

113 Marcia: [*after additional responses to the server*] Um, so it sound like this Le Car incident
114   brought all this stuff front and center.

115 Jean: Oh, we never told you about what the incident was.

116 Marcia: I'd love to hear this, I think. [*laughing*]
117 Although it sounds grueling.

118 Candace: Well, no, it's not, actually, in face, um,
119 I didn't realize it was happening while it was happening [M: OK]
120   until Jean in her incredibly tactful [J: *laughter*] and,
121 well, you didn't beat me over the head, [J: no]
122 which you should've, um,
123 here's the deal.
124 There were some things that needed to be repaired on her car,
125   um, windshield wiper, the little motor

126 Jean: and I had just had moved back from California
127 so I wasn't aware of [C: you didn't have a] repair places.

128 Candace: She didn't have a network, you know, [M: sure, J: right] you know,
129   to call somebody,
130 "Hey do you know somebody that can work on this car?"
131 And so it needed some work,
132 and I had a network of people.
133 My neighbor was a gearhead,
134 and he said, "Oh, take it over to this guy, he, he's a real honest guy," and all that kind of stuff, [M:
135   OK]
136 so, um, so we went over
137 and I didn't let her say a word.

138 Jean: And he did not direct one question to me.

139 Candace: And he knew [J: he knew] it wasn't my car,
140 he knew it was hers, [M: right]
141 but the conversation was between the service guy and me. [M: OK]
142 He didn't even make eye contact with Jean.

143 Marcia: Wow. This was a white guy?

144 Candace: Mmhmm. Out in Worthy. I mean, there's no black people in Worthy.
145   Maybe a couple, to the chagrin of my neighbor across the street.

146 Marcia: The guy with the guns?

147 Candace: Yes, the guy with the guns. So, but truth be told, I'm blinded by, what's--
148   how do I put this to sound like I'm not making excuses for my behavior.

149 Jean: No, just say it.

150 Candace: I'm blinded by my need to control the situation. My assumption that I know more about
151   this than anybody else does.
152 And, but the underlying assumption was . . . my notion about

153 Jean: white status

154 Candace: white status and the black ability to maneuver in any area, you know, so

155 Jean: Now mind you, this woman knows
156   that I've traveled alone around the globe. [M: right, right]
157 I think the mechanic I would be able to negotiate with but [C: but]
158 and it was at a point that I almost thought that Candace looked at me
159   as a project. [M: Oh. Yeah.]
160 This was her social project.

161 Marcia: And so she's doin' all this with the mechanic
162 and you're seething.

163 Jean: Yeah, I'm sorta like, "Does she even see that this is happening?" [M: OK]

164 Candace: And I think it became apparent to you
165   that I didn't see it was happening. [J: mm-mm]
166 I didn't.

167 Marcia: Yeah, yup, and how did this all come to a head.

168 Candace: It wasn't right away.
169 It was not right away, was it?

170 Jean: No, 'cause I think right away I wouldn't have been tactful.

171 Candace: She demonstrated admirable restraint.
172 But it wasn't overly long after that.

173 Marcia: You couldn't just drop it,
174 you had to address it.

175 Jean: Right. It, it, if I'm going to be a project, you need to know
176   that I know I'm a project. [M: right]
177 I will not do it [M: yeah] going quietly into the night. [C: right; M: *nervous laughter*]
178   Too much ego. [M: that's interesting]

179 Candace: On your part?

180 Jean: Yeah.

181 Candace: And that's OK.
182 It was healthy ego.

183 Marcia: Do you remember how you brought it up?
184 Sounds like you brought it up with Candace.

185 Jean: [mmhmm

186 Candace: [Yeah, she did.
187 And it was a phone conversation.

188 Jean: Yeah. [C: Yeah] Um, it was one of Candace.
189 "Did you recognize that that guy never looked at me?"
190 And I think what it was, he had said that he was going to call

191   about a part coming in [C: It was the washer, motor, thing-y]
192 and I said to Candace, "He is never going to call you.
193 He does not want to work on that car,"
194 and then I went on to say, "Did you notice this?
195 Did you notice that?" [M: mmhmm, mm]

196 Candace: And I'm on the phone goin,' "Huh?" [J: "No."]
197 So that was one of those epiphanal moments, um,
198   for me. [M: yeah, yeah, not easy but important]
199 Very important, and so not only do I think that it played large in the further development
200   of our relationship,
201 but it was really, really important for me to be able to look at myself and get a handle on
202   what I was doing, see my behavior for what it was, [M: right]
203 not, and I'm not saying that I beat myself over the head or start to wear a hairshirt
204   or anything like that,
205 but I mean, I think we all need to be aware of how we act out what's inside our head, [M: right]
206 so it was, you know, [M: yeah]
207 she took me by the shoulders and went [*sound meaning "look at yourself!"*], not mean,
208 and she didn't belittle me,
209 and she didn't beat up on me,
210 but it was real important for me to hear those things.

211 Jean: But I also understood Candace's background. [M: yeah, sure],
212 and you can't expect some one who has not interacted or been close with people
213   who have experienced subtle discrimination [C: right; M: right] to recognize it.

214 Candace: There's also, at least from my perspective another thing at play here.
215 I have never had a network of women in my life.
216 I don't have women friends,
217 and I know a lot of women, and,
218 but I've never really had a network of female friends,
219 and that's over the last six or seven years has been a new experience for me,
220 so, just as a, that's just simply an explanatory thing, I just

221 Marcia: Yeah, that's another layer of it.

222 Candace: Yeah, you know.

223 Marcia: Right. And how did all this, uh, resolve.
224 Obviously you didn't give up on each other.

225 Jean: No! Mm-mm.

226 Marcia: Did it resolve right in that phone conversation or another conversation
227   or something else that happened?

228 Candace: It's been an, kind of an ongoing dialogue.

229 Jean: Yeah.

230 Marcia: OK. It opened an important topic.

231 Candace: Uh-huh.

232 Marcia: OK. How long ago was this?

233 Candace: [to Jean] It was right after _____ [Candace's husband] died, wasn't it?

234 Jean: Yeah, about a year after.

235 Candace: So it would be about six years ago, [M: OK, yup]
236 and the reason I say it's an ongoing dialogue because this situation regarding
237   Sugrue's book continues the dialogue. [M: right]

238 Jean: She still hasn't read it.

239 Candace: I don't have time to read the newspaper these days. [M: *laughter*]

240 Jean: You see my friend's priorities?

241 Candace: I'm trying to make a living here!

242 Jean: But I love her in spite of it, but.

243 Candace: And [she truly does.

244 Jean: [And I must, I must say, I will, I will jab as a result of the, my perception of her just,
245   stubbornness about this,
246 and I would do things like say to Candace, Candace, whose mother was Lebanese, whose
247   father was Scottish, and when she had the Scottish flag out, I will say, "What happened
248   to the Lebanese flag?" [M: *laughter*]
249 And then she started dating a Lebanese guy and she became Lebanese.
250 I say, "What's up with that?
251 And do you understand that you're able to switch up? [M: mmhmm, mmhmm]
252 whereas I will never be able to switch up," [M: mmhmm, yeah]
253 and I will say, "Do you know at one time Lebanese was not white?" [M: mmhmm]
254 But it's, I think I jab at Candace's belief,
255 "I'm white, I'm a white girl."

256 Candace: [*laughing*] Well, and by the new, the new and improved U. S. census form all people

257   of Arab descent apparently are white because there's no category there any more
258   [*laughing*] [M: I did realize that, mm; *laughter*] yeah.

259 Jean: I'm going to be Greek, and if they have a problem [C & M: *laughter*] with that,
260 I'm going to tell them to check my DNA. Not my phenotype, [my DNA.

261 Candace: [my DNA, absolutely. Too funny, but. I
262 mean it's funny, but it's not funny. [M: right, right]
263 But, yes, I have this fantasy that I'm white because I look white.

264 Jean: And I told her, you don't look white white. [M: *laughter*]
265 You got a little color in you, girl. [M: *laughter*]

266 Candace: I do.   **0: 22:42**

Much could be said about this complex narrative, but I will focus the analysis using the terms of Labov's (Labov & Waletzky, 1967; Labov, 1972, 1981) narrative grammar, teasing out narrative strands of identity work and social location. None of these strands is a clear, simply sequential time line. "Where does the narrative begin?" I wondered as I first began the analysis. The friends quote Our Friendship Story, telling me that this is "the low point" (Jean, l. 16; Candace, l. 62) in their relationship, but in the moment I wondered when they would actually tell the story. At last (l. 117), Jean says, "Oh, we never told you about what the incident was." I realized later that the friends didn't start at the beginning with Le Car because the relational context for the narrative is an even larger narrative that is very important to them: the narrative of their friendship. The table below summarizes key narrative elements of the friendship narrative and the requested narrative (Le Car):

Table 7.1

Narrative Thread	Abstract	Turning Point	Resolution	Evaluation
Friendship (the relational metanarrative that serves as a context for Le Car)	*Jean asked Candace to read a book re. race and Detroit, but Candace has never complied.*	Jean: "Candace never read the book!" (l. 35) Jean: "She still hasn't read it" (l. 240). (*Jean brings this up before and after the LeCar narrative.*)	Candace: "The reason I say it's an ongoing dialogue because this situation regarding Sugrue's book" (ll. 238-9)	Jean: "But I love her in spite of it" (l. 244). Candace: "And she truly does" (l. 245).
Le Car	Marcia: request for "the low point" (in OFS) Jean: "the low point" (l. 16) Candace: "the low point" (l. 62)	Candace: "I didn't let her say a word" (l. 139).	Marcia: "sounds like you [Jean] brought it up with Candace" (l. 186) *Jean and Candace describe the confrontation that resolved the conflict (ll. 169-212).*	Jean: "This is significant when you look at friendships between women . . . of a different racial background" (ll. 18-19) Marcia: "Obviously you didn't give up on each other" (l. 226).

For the friends, the metanarrative is their friendship, and the Sugrue book, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (2005) provides a repeated episode in that metanarrative, an episode that frames the Le Car narrative. Ponderous and impressive, the book is one that I consulted in my research on race and Detroit. In line 27 above, I volunteer that I've read the book (an overstated claim, since I hadn't read the book in its entirety), but Jean doesn't seem to hear me. This book is serious business between friends, and it is unfinished business. Jean describes her rationale for requesting that Candace read the book (ll. 27-34). The review of this rationale prompts Jean and Candace to reflect on issues of white and black identity (ll. 36-42, 67-72) and to revisit the topic of their differing number of white/black friends (ll. 42-59). After the Le Car narration, the friends begin again where they started, with Sugrue, providing a second discursive bookend (ll. 238-45) to emphasize the relational symbolism. For the friends, the Sugrue book is code for a message that reads something like this: "I love you and will stand by you as a

friend, even though we may never resolve our confrontations about race." Later in the first

interview (ll. 589-606), Jean brings up Sugrue again. This time, the tone of our conversation is

light (I participate by wondering if the friends might schedule a "book of the year" discussion in

order to get around to this project at last), but it is clear that, though the issue is unresolved, it is

not unimportant. Jean, at least, will not forget. In the second interview, she brings up Sugrue one

more time:

Jean: [L]ike we talked about, this Sugrue [C: Sugrue book, right] book: As long as we know each other, annually, I will bring up that book until she reads it, ... [I]t's the only one that I've given you that I've asked you to read, so [I've

Candace: [No, you gave me another one that I read.

Jean: Which one?

Candace: Um, *The Enlightenment in America*.

Jean: Oh, *The Enlightenment in America!* [C: Of course I'd read that. Of course I'd read that.] [C & J: *laughter*] Of course you would read that.

Candace: 'Cause it's all white folk! [*laughing*]

Jean: It, right! It, it didn't contest any of your notions! It was safe! So, until we die, even if I move across country, annually, I will call her and say, "Did you read that book yet?" [C: surprise the hell out of her] and if she dies before she reads that book, I'm gonna make sure they put it with your ashes. [C: *laughter*]

Candace: I'll read it in the next dimension.

Jean: I'll sneak out there in the middle of the night and put Sugrue right where your ashes are! [All: *laughter*]

Candace: The way things are going, you might get my ashes [J & C: *laughter*] [M: wow] Very funny.   (Interview #2, ll. 477-496)

Yes, very funny–in a *noir* film sense–to picture Jean sneaking a book next to Candace's ashes.

And yet, the characteristic humor of the friends deflects tension from a serious unresolved conflict,

a skirmish of which they seem relieved to have resolved in a more satisfying–albeit on a on a

smaller scale–in the Le Car narrative itself.

In the Le Car narrative, which is embedded in the larger friendship story, I provide the

abstract in Our Friendship Story by requesting that the friends discuss a key scene in their

relational history that was "a low point." The friends concur that it was a low point (Jean in l. 16;

Candace in l. 62). It was indeed a low point; my interpretation of this narrative is that the

friendship might have unraveled had the friends not been able to discursively resolve this conflict.

If Jean had been able to confirm that she was little more than a "project" (ll. 17-8) in Candace's

life, the relationship would have faced serious trouble. However, Candace indicates that the

"project" framing of her intentions was not accurate. She does so even in the way she describes

the turning point moment: *"I didn't let her say a word."* Not, "Well, the mechanic was obviously

a racist . . ." or "I was getting around to consulting with Jean . . .," but, *"I didn't let her say a

word."* Candace claims her own agency and her own culpability in the silencing and

disempowering of her friend.   Candace clearly regrets her role in the Le Car incident, and, once

the heat of the moment is past, Jean is able to engage in perspective taking, recognizing that her

friend has a limited capacity to recognize "subtle discrimination" (l. 215), not having experienced

it herself.

The Le Car narrative resolved in a way that affirmed and strengthened the friendship, but

the story doesn't end here. Additional strands of the Le Car narrative reveal even more co-

constructed identity work.   Again, a table will summarize:

Table 7.2

Narrative Thread	Abstract	Turning Point	Resolution	Evaluation
Jean's Identity (a narrative subtext)	*The LeCar incident reaffirms Jean's identity relationally.*	Jean: "If I'm going to be a project, you need to know that I know I'm a project" (ll. 177-8).	*Jean confronted Candace in LeCar.*	Jean: "I'm a product of Detroit, married to an engineer, we could care less about an automobile!" (l. 78-9) Jean: "too much ego" [to be a project without protest] (l. 180). Candace: "It was healthy ego" (l. 184)
Candace's Identity (a narrative subtext)	*Candace came to epiphanies re. identity in the LeCar incident.*	Candace: "I didn't let her say a word" (l. 139).	*Jean's confrontation initiated the identity work.*	Candace: "I'm a control freak" (l. 65). Candace: "part of it is my deeply embodied notions about white and black" (l. 69) Jean: "Candace is a gear-head" (l. 71; see also ll. 104-6). Candace: "I'm a product of Detroit" (l. 75) Candace: "I have never had a network of women in my life" (l. 217).
Marcia's Identity (a narrative subtext)	*Marcia identified with Candace in the LeCar incident.*	*Marcia saw her own lack of awareness in Candace's.*	*Jean's confrontation reminded her of her own friend's confrontation.*	Marcia: "It sounds grueling" (l. 119) *Marcia recognized her own (hopefully past) condescension.*

When Jean makes a conscious decision to confront Candace about the incident with the mechanic and does so at a later time when she is able to be "tactful" (l. 172), her identity is affirmed as a strong woman who does not need to be represented by a white friend. She needs no charitable, condescending assistance. She says she has "too much ego" (l. 184), and her friend calls it "healthy ego" (l. 184). She also defines what it means for her to be a "product of Detroit" (l. 78), and that does *not* include–defying the stereotype–a passion for cars. The friends spar on the question of whether or not a love of the automobile and the attendant interest in their workings is an integral part of Detroit identity. This discussion, by the way, is not the central evaluation that

arises out of the narrative strands of identity work, but it is significant that, just like with the Sugrue book, the friends do not reach consensus. Candace is a product of Detroit, so she loves cars. Jean is a product of Detroit, but she doesn't love cars.

The narrative thread of Candace's identity work is thick with reflexivity. She owns up to the central evaluation that her friend wants her to recognize. When she didn't let her friend "say a word" (l. 139) in the discussion with the mechanic, she acknowledges that she was surfacing her "deeply embodied notions about white and black" (l. 69). But Jean's confrontation also leads to additional self-disclosures. Candace admits that she is a "control freak" (l. 65) and "a product of Detroit" (l. 75) in a conventional sense (and the friends disdain conventionality). Candace also says that she has not typically enjoyed a network of women friends (l. 220), with the implicit assumption that she does not have extensive practice in collaboratively solving problems. All of these, she claims, played some role in her behavior with the mechanic. These identity statements could be interpreted as mere attempts to reduce her own culpability, but, for the most part, Jean lets them stand. Even though the friends disagree about what it means to be a "product of Detroit," Jean acknowledges that Candace is a "gearhead" (l. 71) who thrives on running "around with the latest automobile" (l. 104).

Just as in my conversations with Erica and Jynil, Candace and Jean could not have been aware of the full extent of the identity work that Le Car performed for me, since most of it was initiated through interior dialogue. At only one point do I offer a verbal trace of the intrapersonal communication. When the friends finally come around to telling the core narrative, Le Car, I have been identifying with Candace's already-evident identity work initiated by Jean's confrontation.

The narrative is "too close for comfort," so when Jean says, "Oh, we never told you about what the

incident was" (l. 117), my laughter is nervous when I reply, "I'd love to hear this, I think.

Although it sounds grueling" (ll. 118-9). Yes, grueling. I'm having flashbacks to times like the

moment in Colorado when a friend confronted me. We were in a large group of quilters,[28] only

two of whom where black. My friend Joelle, with whom I sat at most meetings, was one of the

black members. When an opportunity arose for some of us to attend a convention, I asked the

other black quilter, Shenae, to be my roommate. Joelle wasn't planning to attend the convention,

but she confronted me with what I interpreted as an accusing tone: "How do you know *her*?" I

may be mistaken, but I think this was no petty jealousy. Joelle hadn't seen me hanging out with

Shenae, and I think she was logically deducing that I might be making a "project" (to use Jean's

apt term) out of befriending the two black members of the quilting club. Embarrassed, I

stammered something about how Shenae and I shared other interests besides quilting. Joelle

didn't purse the conversation, but her confrontation gave me pause. Was I, indeed, working on a

cross-race relational project in the quilters' group? Did I feel sorry for the black members because

they were outnumbered? Did I think they needed my help? This incident took place long before I

decided to work on the current dissertation topic, but I decided that, *yes*, perhaps–at least in part–I

was working on some little social project that clearly needed greater reflexivity. My strong self-

reproach following my friend's gentle reproach is an important strand of identity work that I took

into my life at the Detroit/Grosse Pointe border. And so, recalling this incident–and perhaps

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[28]The activity of our group and the names of my friends have been changed to protect
their privacy.

others like it–made the experience of listening to Candace and Jean co-construct Le Car a

"grueling" one–though it was healthy as well.

Of the three narratives I am considering at length (one for each pair of friends), Le Car is

the one that seems to have the most to say about what Riessman (2008) calls "local" and "societal"

contexts for narrative.   In Le Car, metro Detroit (the local context) and race relations (a societal

context), merit their own strands within the co-constructed narrative of Le Car:

Table 7.3

Narrative Thread	Abstract	Turning Point	Resolution	Evaluation
Metro Detroit (the local social geographic context for the friendship, LeCar, and the narrative subtexts)	*The Detroit stage is a place where a suburban white male, a suburban white friend, and an urban black friend experience an important conflict.*	Jean: "He did not direct one question to me" (l. 140) Candace: "The conversation was between the service guy and me. He didn't even make eye contact with Jean" (ll. 143-4).	*The two friends come to an understanding, while the white mechanic and metro Detroit are left behind.*	*The friends arrive at contrasting conclusions about what it means to be a "product of Detroit" (see their identity work above).* Jean: "Detroit is where I live at this moment, but I am not wedded to this area" (ll. 90-1) Candace: "It's like a set for a movie. It's just flats" (ll. 99-100)
Race (the societal context for Le Car)	Jean: "getting people to understand this, this concept that white is normal" (ll. 37-8)	Candace: "I manifested that whole assumption of white normalness without really being aware of it" (ll. 61-2; see also ll. 154-5) Jean: "It was at this point that I almost thought that Candace looked at me as a project" (ll. 160-1)	Jean: "it's an area in our friendship that we still sorta . . . go back and forth" (ll. 40-1) Jean: "I jab at Candace's belief, 'I'm white, I'm a white girl'" (ll. 256-7).	Jean: "You can't expect some one who has not interacted or been close with people who have experienced subtle discrimination to recognize it" (ll. 214-5). Jean: "And do you understand that you're able to switch up?. . . whereas I will never be able to switch up" (ll. 253-4).

Interestingly, although these last two narrative strands are of great interest to me as a researcher,

the table above is the only one where my words do not appear as direct quotes (no green ink!).

Although I certainly was an active participant in these strands of the discussion, I did not

(according to my own analysis, at least) directly contribute any of the key elements of the narrative grammar. The friends were the key players in these narrative co-constructions. As far as metro Detroit is concerned, the Le Car incident seemed to be one that confirmed for these friends how Detroit is not a place where enlightened attitudes flourish.   Jean says at one point,

Where am I going in this city anyway?
I mean, Detroit is where I live at this moment,
but I am not wedded to this area.
I really don't like it.
I'm just here. [C: right]
And the minute I can get out of here, color me gone!
It's, it's too provincial,
it's, it's too polarized,
it's too caught up in what I call conspicuous consumption that projects this image
        with very little behind it. (ll. 89-98)

Candace concurs, saying that Detroit is "like a, a set for a movie. It's just flats, you know" (ll. 99-100). Candace's choice of a simile is interesting here. She says that Detroit is like the set of *Blazing Saddles,* a movie with comic conflict. A movie is a narrative genre, and what the friends seem to be saying is that, in their narrative, Detroit is a stage where they are skeptical of every reality. Once Jean confronts Candace, they do not attempt to re-engage the white male mechanic (nor does Jean's car receive repair from him).   He has had his chance, and he did not engage in conversation or even eye contact with Jean. The friends then write him out of the script, leaving him behind among the flats of metro Detroit, while Jean and Candace progress to another level of co-constructed friendship identity.

I have already addressed the topic of race in the identity work narrative strands above, but a few final observations are possible when race is considered as a separate narrative strand. Le Car does seem to be an narrative moment when Jean takes on the whole process of racial

socialization; this seems to be just one episode among many when she wants "people to understand" what they take for granted, that "white is normal" (ll. 37-8). She wants people to stop acting upon unexamined assumptions such as these: "Oh, Jean, you can't know anything about this! You're just this poor little black girl. I'll fix it for you!" (Candace, ll. 70-2). Jean is the star player in this narrative strand; she understands white people may not be able to think outside their limited experiences (ll. 214-215). Although it does not seem immediately connected to Le Car, Jean picks up the thread of this strand that involves passing and reading one another's racial identities. She teases her friend about how Candace can "switcheroo" between Scottish and Lebanese identities, while she herself cannot switch. Everyone reads Jean's racial/ethnic identity as African American.

Interestingly, though race is an "area" in the friendship that is not fully resolved (the friends still "go back and forth" (ll. 38-9)), the Le Car racial strand illustrates a kind of discursive progress that the friends have achieved. Although they call their friendship "The Zebra Experience," as illustrated in the introductory quote of this chapter, they are discursively able to move beyond the oppositional terms that a zebra's stripes might indicate. With the zebra metaphor and elsewhere, the friends speak of race in oppositional terms. The gist of their talk generally runs as follows: "I am *this*, and you are *that*. Our racial identities, black and white, are to be respected, not blended." Interestingly, at the coda of Le Car, when the friends are returning from narrating the past to living in the present, Jean says of her friend, "And I told her, you don't look white white. You got a little color in you, girl" (l. 266-7). Candace acknowledges it: "I do" (l. 268). Though this exchange is light, joking, the friends seem to be assenting to something important

about racial identity: It may not be just one or the other. Even a white person like Candace, who struggles with the racial baggage of her socialization process, might have "a little color"–not just "on" her, but "*in*" her.

VIII. THE NARRATIVES OF THE FRIENDS WITHIN THE METANARRATIVE

OF METRO DETROIT

Introduction

Many angles of analysis are possible for a researcher considering how the stories (the

longer relational chronologies) and narratives (the shorter "stories within a story") relate to the

metanarrative of Detroit, specifically focusing on how a co-constructed racial and social space

provides a provocative discursive setting for the initiation and maintenance of women's

friendships.   For instance, focusing on what I am claiming is Detroit's emblematic word, *fight*, I

could trace in the interview transcripts the many ways that the friends use analogies of struggle or

violence in conversation that is ostensibly about something else (e.g., Celia and Kate's "throwing"

children to get them back and forth to friends' houses, which, for them, would be like "super

slammin'" (Interview #1, ll. 559-567 & 581-4); or Candace's declaration about how she and Jean

have "kicked" each other through their Master's and doctoral programs (Interview #1, ll. 269-271).

Such discursive choices say much about the way that the fighting spirit of Detroit is imbibed by

even the dearest of friends. However, in keeping with my commitment to study narrative

holistically, I will concentrate my analysis on entire narratives, first of all, on the narratives

featured in the chapters about the friends.

In doing so, my approach will give attention to both the empirical evidence of the discourse

itself and also to the "hauntings" (Gordon, 2008) of the racial history of the metro Detroit

metanarrative–that history with *fight* as its marching order.   For the first part of this analysis, I

will turn again to Labov (1981; Labov & Fanshel, 1977), this time to his consideration of requests

and challenges. Viewing the deep structure of the friends' featured narratives through this analytic

lens, the friends' interactional performances may be seen as explicit and implicit requests and

challenges. In this way, the co-constructed narratives of the friends reflect narratives within the

racial history of metro Detroit. As just one example, I offer the case of Ossian Sweet, the black

doctor who purchased a home in the 1920s in a white neighborhood of Detroit. In this implicit

dialogue, I have italicized the terms that Labov uses for requests (including their conditions) and

challenges:

Sweet: I *request* that you accept me as you would any new neighbor.

White neighbors: You do not have the *right* to do this, and we have no *obligation* to

comply.

Sweet: I repeat my *request* to live in this neighborhood. I do have the right, and you are

obligated to comply. I am not changing my mind.

White neighbors: No. (Sweet's response is heard as the "aggravated form of criticism"

(Labov, 1977, p. 95) that it is.)

Sweet: I demand that I be allowed to live in this neighborhood. I have paid for this house

and I have the *right* to live there.   (a *challenge*).

White neighbors: We demand that you change your mind. (a *counter-challenge*)

Clearly, the white neighbors do not accept their need to comply with Sweet's request or even his

right to make the request. They are questioning Sweet at a basic level of identity, his status as an

equal human being. The series of challenge and counter-challenge brings them to an impasse,

one that concludes dialogue (as also occurs in Labov's (1981) analysis of violent episodes) and compels both sides to take up weapons. Tragically, the verbal request has escalated into physical violence.

The "haunting" (Gordon, 2008) of metro Detroit history is that multiple interactions (some famous and most mundane) across decades of time and miles of space have played out like this narrative. We in metro Detroit are always up for a fight–not always with the obviously tragic results that ensued with Ossian Sweet and his family–but always, at least, with the kind of dissonance in perceptions of status that are conducive to tension–tension that crackles in the air and soon ignites in yet another interaction, whether it be political, corporate, turf-related, or interpersonal.

However, the friendships in this case study, for the most part, embody a counternarrative to the metanarrative of Detroit. Mutually accepting the status of "friend" as some one who is an equal worthy of attention and affection, the friends negotiate requests and even challenges in ways that affirm and celebrate relationships rather than breaking them off. Although a conflict or fight might have ensued at various points in their narratives, the friends co-construct agency to choose other paths. Because the metanarrative of Detroit implicates and invokes race in so many embedded ways, race also often takes a role–albeit not always a starring one–in the counternarratives of the friends. Therefore at some points in the following analysis, I will offer commentary about the role of race in the featured narratives. Just as in the preceding example of the Ossian Sweet/white neighbors analysis, I will apply Labovian terms for requests and

challenges to the implicit–rather than directly conversational–dialogue embedded in the narratives of the friends in this case study.

<center>Analysis of Three Narratives Within the Metanarrative of Metro Detroit</center>

Taking the three featured narratives of the friends in the same order as the preceding chapters, we begin with Celia and Kate's narrative, "Jamaica Changed Everything." Although the friends joke about "how it came about" (Part 1, l. 5) (Celia says, "Did they just invite themselves or did we invite them? (Part 1, ll. 9-10)), at some point an implicit or explicit *request*[29] for action must have been offered by Celia: "Would your and your husband join my husband and me on a trip to Jamaica?" Celia is implying that the status of a close friend gives her the *right* to make such a request. Though she would deny that Kate had an *obligation* to visit Jamaica, maintaining the status of close friends does mean that Kate should at least offer a plausible account if she needs to refuse. Celia is taking a risk in this request, in that Jamaica is her home culture, and Kate and/or her husband might act like ill-mannered tourists, becoming "snippy" or "stuck-up" (Part 1, ll. 51-2). Though Celia would never bring this up, many observers would say her risk was elevated in this incident, since Kate and her husband would be whites performing in a black culture. Because of the cultural/racial element in the request, it includes a hint of *challenge*: "I challenge you to enjoy Jamaica with us (even though it is my home culture and not yours)." Kate readily accepts the request/challenge, appreciative that her friend Celia and her husband made the challenge doable, including "us like we'd been around forever" and treating them to local, rather than strictly

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[29]Upon first use of Labov's terms for rules of request and challenge (see pp. 130ff.), the terms will be italicized.

tourist pleasures (Part 1, ll. 23-25). Celia is pleased that her friend accepted the request to visit Jamaica, concluding that her friend was up to the challenge: "[T]hey hung tough, they did good . . . . Kate and her husband just acted like, this is what they do every day" (Part 1, ll. 49-50). Kate–although the mosquitoes incident has stayed with her as a trace of her friend's challenge–expresses her compliance with the request as easy and joyful. She concludes at the outset of the narrative, "[I]t was a blast, . . . it was a blast" (Part 1, ll. 12-13).

At several points in the narrative, the kind of conflict that is prevalent in metro Detroit might have polluted this narrative. Kate might have refused the request to visit Jamaica or expressed reluctance, pressing Celia either to repeat the request (always perceived as aggravating to the requester (Labov, 1977, p. 95)) or withdraw it (endangering Kate's status as a friend). The mosquitoes event or any culturally challenging experience may have prompted Kate and her husband to behave badly, perhaps prompting Celia to wish she had never made the request. Instead, everybody had a great time in Jamaica. The request/challenge and acceptance becomes an enhancement or reinforcement (Labov, p. 64) of their status as friends. Celia and her husband demonstrate this enhanced status in a highly dramatic way in "the bushes" incident. Because Kate and her husband were present for this "family" event, they are endorsed by Celia and John as family. The friends return to metro Detroit as sister friends. They will continue to reinforce this status over the years–and even over gaps in time and space–through such actions as making each other godparents of their children (in Kate's case, defying family tradition that says godparents should be relatives) and a willingness bring their whole families to events that are otherwise all white or all black (Interview #1, ll. 439-443).

Turning to the featured narrative from Erica and Jynil, "The Best Night," we find that Jynil's *request* of Erica is also a large one–not to visit a home country, but to help her return to a "home faith." Jynil implicitly requests Erica to help her in a spiritual journey that results in Catholic confirmation. I read this request as what Labov (1977) would call a "petition," which is a "mitigated request" that Jynil repeatedly implies is a great deal to ask even of a close friend. For Jynil's request is not only a request for action, but for "confirmation, attention," and "approval" (p. 63) in a context where a significant family member is disapproving and the rules of Catholicism are not in her favor. But Erica certainly meets the request *condition of ability*, in Jynil's perception. Neither friend, in my opinion, would like the terms "obligation" to do a task or a "right" to request it–which are also part of request conditions–but they are such close friends at the time of this narrative that Jynil trusts that her friend will be willing to help without being affronted by such an expansive request. Jynil implies that there is precedent for this request when she says the confirmation was "*another* area that Erica really helped me with" (Part 1, l. 8; italics added).

Not only does Erica comply with Jynil's request–a process that involves many months and many discussions–she goes even beyond Jynil's expectations by showing up at the confirmation ceremony. Jynil says, "I didn't know, I did not know that they [Erica and the Jewish friend] were coming and, I mean, it made me cry" (Part 1, ll. 124-5). Erica follows this statement with the modest, "wouldn't have missed it, we definitely wouldn't have missed it" (Part 1, l. 128). Here we find, then, the classic pattern of request > compliance > thanks > minimization that Labov (1981) notes in his discussion of requests and challenges.

At several points, however, Erica and Jynil might have engaged in conflict rather than coherence. Not only was Jynil asking much in her request based on her own positionality (as an individual not well situated to become a Catholic), but on Erica's. For since Erica is a Muslim, this situation might conceivably have been too difficult to manage successfully, even for a good friend. Many good friends in Erica's situation would rather have argued about points of doctrine, attempted to persuade the friend to join her own faith, or simply opted out of active engagement, preferring a less intense supportive role.

Furthermore, both friends risked conflict arising out of Jynil's significant family member's opposition to the confirmation process. The difficulties in that relationship might have carried into the relationship with Erica and Jynil, and might have flared significantly had Jynil's family member blamed Erica for supporting Jynil in her religious quest. The friends successfully weather this risk of conflict, however, as well as a potential danger posed by the racial geography of metro Detroit. The flexible parish that Jynil discovered is well into what Hartigan (1999) would call a white "zone"; its location in a Township (code here for "beyond the suburbs") is well past the border made legendary by Eminem even outside of Detroit, 8-Mile Road.   The priest is Polish (Part 1, l. 141) and represents a faith that, though it was instrumental in the founding of Detroit more than 300 years ago and still has a huge presence in metro Detroit, has been steadily retreating from inside the city limits ever since the 1950s. Five years ago, the Detroit Cardinal acknowledged the scale of decades of Catholic exodus to suburban and exurban areas, apologizing to a gathering of black Baptist pastors for the racism involved (Crumm, 2006, p. 6A). A logical response for a black friend in metro Detroit, given such history and such a social location, would

be to avoid attending the confirmation service (perhaps the location also disinclined Jynil from urging her friend to attend). Since the friends indicate that this is a "high-tech" church (Part 1, ll. 137-8), a friend might say, "Wow, I'd like to see the DVD of that service! I bet it was great." But Erica is undaunted by the local Catholic history, the fact that Catholicism is predominantly white in metro Detroit, and that the parish is located in a decidedly white zone. She does not conform to the script of the racially/religiously contested history of the area; instead, she attends the service not just to support, but to "celebrate" Jynil, to borrow from Sampson's (1993) felicitous phrase, "celebrating the other."

In doing so, Erica replies to her friend's request with a positive "challenge," what Labov (1977) says includes "praise" and "reinforcement" (p. 64) of the other person's "right to hold a given status" (1981, p. 242). Indeed, just as is the case with Celia and Kate, "The Best Night" narrative seems to confirm Jynil and Erica as sister-friends. In fact, they are the only ones among the three pairs to explicitly say that they feel like sisters to one another. At the confirmation, this kind of sister-friendship is embodied, since Jynil's significant family member did not attend, and if the largely Catholic members of Jynil's extended family attended, we do not hear about them. We only hear about Erica, who does not look like a biological sister. She is also not a sister in the sense that many black metro Detroiters claim to be (a "sister" in the same faith), but she proves herself to be a sister-friend by her overwhelmingly positive response to Jynil's request for support.

Before turning to a consideration of the third featured narrative, I offer a final thought about the friendships of Erica and Jynil and Celia and Kate: These friends should not be represented as entirely counter to their social location in metro Detroit. They do *not* avoid all

conflict with each other, and they *do* know how to fight.   Erica, for instance, disturbed Jynil's

professional inertia by insisting that she should look "outside the box" of her current employment.

Celia and Kate needed to work through a time when each thought the other person was "crazy"for

choosing to stay at home or continue with employment after embarking upon parenthood. But

they resolved those conflicts. And when they *really* fight, they fight on the same side.   Examples

that come to mind are the ways that both pairs of friends advocate for each other and stand

together when others in their work environments become hostile. The friends do fight, but they

don't follow the metro Detroit play book, which calls for fighting across racial and geographic

lines–conflict that typically does not lead either side to experience an enduring victory.

 While Celia and Kate and Erica and Jynil run the risk of damaging their relationships

through conflict in their featured narratives, Jean and Candace come significantly closer to

paralleling the metro Detroit metanarrative. In Le Car, Jean throws down a *challenge*. When she

confronts Candace about the car incident, she says implicitly, "Prove to me that I am a friend and

not a project." The challenge is serious, since, at a very basic level, a "friend" is a person, and a

"project" is an object. Furthermore, Jean says that this incident is not the first time such an issue

has arisen between the friends (ll. 21-6), and the challenge involves not just individual identity, but

group (racial) identity (ll. 37-41). Candace agrees that the incident is about race–about her notions

of white superiority and black helplessness (ll. 69-72). A challenge, by definition, is relationally

serious, since Labov (1977) says that if the challenge proves to be true, it "*would weaken a*

person's claim to be competent in filling the role associated with a valued status" (p. 97; italics in

the original).   The "valued status" here is the status of close friend, and so the tension in this

narrative is high. Even if Candace would not lose her status as a friend, she seems at least in danger of losing "esteem" as a friend (Labov, p. 96).

However, a series of *mitigating conversational moves* softens the challenge. Candace says that part of what was going on in this situation is that she is "a control freak," and "that crosses all color lines" (ll. 65-6). She also says that the challenge was justified, since Jean was expressing "healthy ego" (l. 184). Perhaps surprisingly, Jean also contributes mitigation to her own challenge. She adds complexity to her friend's potential motivation, saying that the incident spurred Candace's "gear head" and first adopter identities (ll. 73, 106). Late in the narrative, Jean offers a very strong mitigation of her own challenge, saying that she "understood Candace's background," and didn't expect "some one who has not interacted or been close with people who have experienced subtle discrimination to recognize it" (ll. 213-5).

Jean also delivers the challenge in mitigated ways–waiting until her temper had cooled before she brought up the subject and presenting the problem in a manner that saved face for Candace. Jean frames her confrontation not first of all as a transgression on Candace's part, but in terms of the way that the attendant objectified her (ll. 191-7). She asks Candace a series of questions (e.g., "Did you notice this? Did you notice that?" (ll. 196-7)) to lead her toward her own recognition of the problem.

And Candace does indeed recognize the problem–not just with the attendant, but with herself. In Labov's (1977) terms, she is willing to "*admit* the challenge to be valid." However, Labov says that an admission also includes a willingness to "suffer the consequences of accepting lower status" (p. 64). Neither Candace nor Jean state or imply that Jean is now relegated to lower

status as a friend. Instead, this incident seems to have settled in Jean's mind that Candace did not, in fact, consider her a "project," and her status as a friend is reinstated–if not enhanced–by her recognition of the problem and her willingness to take responsibility. The conflict of the friends, again, is real, but it does not follow a standard script–either Detroit's script or the typical script for a linguistic challenge.

Relatedly, however, Candace still has not complied with a *repeated request* by Jean: that Candace read Sugrue's (2006) book. Labov's (1977) Rule of Delayed Requests states:

> If A makes a request for B to perform an action X in role R, based on needs, abilities, obligations, and rights which have been valid for some time, then A is heard as challenging B's competence in role R. (p. 94)

Clearly, this request meets the *conditions* for a legitimate request: Jean has made the case as to why the action should be done by Candace (ll. 27-34); she knows that Candace, as a person with a Master's degree, is able to read the book. As a friend, Candace has an *obligation* to meet a reasonable request, and so Jean has the *right* to make it. Just as in the case of the challenge, this request seems especially urgent since it relates to a sensitive topic, especially for Jean: how racial identity is implicated in migration patterns in metro Detroit. However, Candace meets the request with an accounting: She says she doesn't have time (ll. 241, 243). And yet, she admits that she *did* have time to read another book that Jean recommended. Laughingly, she admits in the second transcript excerpt that she read that other book because it wouldn't challenge her notions: It was "all white folk!" (l. 485)

Serious relational consequences could result from a repeatedly denied request of this kind. Labov (1977) writes that "repeated requests" never met with compliance become "an aggravated form of criticism" that challenge "the other's competence" in a role "quite sharply" (p. 95). However, Jean seems to accept, at least for now, Candace's accounting and her admission that she would rather not read a book that might strongly contest her perceptions of race and migration in metro Detroit. The friends, as pointed out in the previous analysis of this narrative, engage in some dark humor about the book, agree that this conflict is unresolved, and continue as friends. An ongoing, delayed, repeated request–one that would have turned many friends against one another and challenged the viability of their friendship–is a conflict that these friends are weathering. Again, though the friends call themselves "native Detroiters," they do not fight like Detroiters.

Of the three friendships, then, Jean and Candace are–in an interview context, at least–the most willing to tread the most dangerous relational territory in their implicit and explicit requests and challenges. They are also the pair who are most willing to explicitly invoke race in their requests and challenges. All pairs of friends, however, display a counternarrative to the metanarrative of Detroit, in which race is deeply implicated. Rather than consistently refusing requests and retreating from or aggravating challenges, eventually cutting off dialogue entirely, the friends keep interacting. They typically make reasonable requests and comply amiably–sometimes even remarkably. Even in the repeatedly denied request in Candace and Jean's relationship, they keep talking–and even laughing. Their "relational culture" (Wood, 1982) includes what McCullough calls an ongoing "etiquette of care and confrontation" (p. 189). The voice of the

"ghost" (Gordon, 2008) that urges metro Detroiters to *fight* (as the "something-to-be-done" about oppression) is out of range for these friends.

Palimpsests of the Metro Detroit Racial Narratives and the Friends' Stories

I am grateful to Avery Gordon (2008) for summoning a "rememory" (p. 164) of an earlier self–of myself as an undergrad studying ancient Greek texts. Gordon helped me recall the palimpsest, an ancient document "that has been inscribed several times, where the remnants of earlier, imperfectly erased scripting is still detectable" (p. 146). This visibly intertextual/intersubjective text has becomes a discursive window into complex oppressions that still haunt us today. For Gordon, Toni Morrison's (1987) novel *Beloved*, superimposed on slave narratives, is a palimpsest on the hauntings of America's racial past. For the friendship dissertation research, the palimpsest is a superimposition of the voices that I heard in the stories of the friends upon the intersubjective accounts of racial history in metro Detroit that I presented in Chapter III. The resulting palimpsest becomes a test, then, of my claim that every metro Detroit resident who lives here for a significant stretch of time will imbibe one or both of these narratives.

I retrieved the collective narratives of black and white Detroiters to create palimpsests for each of the six friends. Relying on my own imbibing–my limited though powerful relational authority as a researcher who has attended deeply and repeatedly (in person, in recordings, and in transcripts) to the voices of the friends–I imagined what they might say to the statements in the collective narratives. Taking the racial narratives as a kind of "request" for response (in the rule of request sense that was central to the preceding analysis), I wrote quickly and instinctively, responding in the friends' voices. Sometimes direct quotes from the transcripts came to mind.

Sometimes the responses were paraphrases of statements from the friends. Sometimes the responses were no more than educated guesses. I wrote quickly and instinctively, returning later to make only a few changes when the voices didn't "sound" quite true to the friends as I heard them in the interactive moment.

The resulting palimpsests are all about me and, at the same time, not about me. The original metro Detroit narratives were the collective tales of life in a social landscape as a racialized experience. I did not make them up, but I distilled them. The responses of the friends are based directly on the self-disclosures that they offered to me. Sometimes as I wrote the responses in the palimpsests, I needed to check my own instinct to shape what the friends "said" so that it would more directly reflect some analytic point I hoped to make or some representation of the friends that I wanted to highlight. I tried to represent their voices as faithfully as possible. When/if they read this document, I hope they will think that–at least most of the time–I said what they might say (I also hope they will be grateful that I did this work rather than requesting another interview!). I recognize that occasionally my own diction may be asserting itself. For example, in Celia's first response, I hear myself talking in the words, "the legacy of need that history has visited upon Detroit." However, of all six friends, Celia is that one that I know best. I may be hearing things, but I can hear her say, "You go, girl. I like the way you said that. That's just what I mean." So I justify–at least in this example–my own intrusions of diction (the reader may disagree). A final note on the texts of the palimpsests: Knowing that all six friends are "talkers," my representation of their thoughts is probably shorter than what they would say during an actual

conversation. Yet, I hope I have intuited the gist of at least a part of how they might actually respond.

Here, then, are six texts representing collective memory and intersubjective collaboration, six requests for response that take the form of palimpsests:

1. "Celia's"[30] Responses

We came to this country as slaves and endured centuries of oppression.
When we escaped slavery and Jim Crow in the South, we thought we were arriving in a promised land where good jobs were plentiful.
The reality was different. Detroit really didn't want us.
  My husband, a native Detroiter, understands this history better than I do. I came here from Jamaica to help raise the child of a family member whose wife had died. I was deeply wanted here and had important family work to do. However, in my work at a Detroit nonprofit I see every day the legacy of need that history has visited upon Detroit families.
The factory bosses mistreated us, and the citizens relegated us to the worst neighborhoods.
  My husband and I have had our troubles with financial and employment issues, but we've been able to hold things together, by God's grace. And a financial blessing can bring an African American family to a good neighborhood in metro Detroit. That's what happened to us.
Racist harassment and violence met us any time we resisted (and often when we were just minding our own business).
  I have seen the disastrous effects of harassment and violence, but they are not always race-related.
We vented our rage in the civil disturbances that white folks call riots.
  White or black, no matter what it's called, violence is wrong.
We elected our own mayor. We took over neighborhoods, and we took control of Detroit.
  I'm just not sure about the "we" part. This happened before my time in Detroit, and though I identify myself as Black, my heritage is still Jamaican.
You white folks ran away.
  I wouldn't say that my friend Kate ran away, but I do wish she and her family lived closer.

---

[30]In every case in the palimpsests, when the friends' voices are represented, I as researcher need to be taken into consideration as a mediator of the voices. I will repeatedly remind myself and readers of this reality by placing the friends' names in quotation marks in relation to the palimpsests.

Now when we have problems, you blame them on us, but that's just blaming the victim, and it's patently unjust.

That whole victim thing bothers me. People can always do something about their problems. Don't blame them on white people or on anyone else. Take responsibility for what you can do with your life, even if there are limitations. If you're in a place where you have the means to give somebody else a lift, then do that, too.

2. "Kate's" Responses

We built Detroit and it was a good place. The birth of the auto industry, the rise of the middle class through unionization: It all happened here.

Growing up in the suburbs, I felt life was good. I didn't especially identify with Detroit history.

Detroit was a hub of opportunity for people of all ethnicities and races.
Yes, there was racial tension, but it could have been managed.

I see now that the color line of my girlhood kept me from significant relationships with blacks. Our "integrated" schools didn't mean that we really mixed with each other, and they probably masked tension.

1967 changed all that. The riots showed that we weren't wanted any more.

I wasn't wanted in my first work place in Detroit as a social worker. I blew up one day at my co-workers. My friend Celia supported me.

Detroit became a violent, frightening place.

I don't live in Detroit, but I'm not afraid of it. I'm going to seminary there and may work there one day.

The blacks who took over trashed the city in every way.

I wouldn't want to blame any one racial group for the troubles of Detroit.

We left because we had to.

I never lived there so I never left. I do admit that I've gradually moved further away from the city limits. The reason for moving is that it seemed best for my family.

Coleman Young was a disaster. Instead of healing divisions, he cut them deeper.

I don't like divisions of any kind. I wish people could appreciate each other.

Now when we go back to our old neighborhoods, they may not even exist any more.

I feel sad for people who have this experience. It's not something that I face.

We might be willing to help Detroit, but we feel helpless.

I don't feel helpless. Like I said, I may choose to work in Detroit once I finish seminary. It will be great to have at least part of my life closer to my friend Celia.

The problems are huge, and Detroit doesn't seem to want white people any more.

Yes, the problems are huge, and I wouldn't expect to solve them all. But I really don't feel white–more like I was supposed to be born black! I welcome the idea of working in Detroit, even though, as usual, I would have to fight my own tendency toward guilt and

not standing up for who I am. I would deal with whoever didn't want to welcome me. Celia, I know, would support me.

3. "Erica's" Responses

We came to this country as slaves and endured centuries of oppression.
      I organized rallies against the flying of the Confederate flag in the South, but local blacks wouldn't come. Yes, slavery dies hard.
When we escaped slavery and Jim Crow in the South, we thought we were arriving in a promised land where good jobs were plentiful.
      As an undergrad, I was a history major, so I respect the ways that Detroiters represent their own history. But I can only speak first-hand of my own history. When I came to Detroit, I worked with refugees to help them get started in their "promised land."
The reality was different. Detroit really didn't want us.
      I can imagine that this was so. Detroit doesn't always seem to want the refugees that I used to work with, either. But I learned the social landscape of Detroit and helped them (and my friend Jynil) survive in it.
The factory bosses mistreated us, and the citizens relegated us to the worst neighborhoods.
      One of my supervisors in Macomb County mistreated me. As for neighborhoods, I chose my own neighborhood, first in Detroit, and then close to Detroit. I *am* frustrated that integrated schools–which I value–aren't close to hardly any one's neighborhoods around here.
Racist harassment and violence met us any time we resisted (and often when we were just minding our own business).
      Harassment met me in suburban Macomb County, but it wasn't entirely about race.
We vented our rage in the civil disturbances that white folks call riots.
      I was angry with how some people treated me in Macomb County, but my friend Jynil helped me not only survive, but thrive.
We elected our own mayor. We took over neighborhoods, and we took control of Detroit.
      I'm not into control, but I understand people who are. When the Detroit powers-that-be didn't want an outsider's intervention in a Detroit nonprofit, I advocated for my friend Jynil.
You white folks ran away.
      Jynil didn't run away, even though she lives in Lakeside Village. She knows how to work with anyone, including Detroiters.
Now when we have problems, you blame them on us, but that's just blaming the victim, and it's patently unjust.
      Not every white person blames blacks in Detroit. My friend Jynil works in Detroit, where she embodies community service. I talk it, but she embodies it. She takes in the people that others would "throw away."

4. "Jynil's" Responses

We built Detroit and it was a good place. The birth of the auto industry, the rise of the middle class through unionization: It all happened here.

Detroit is still a good place.

Detroit was a hub of opportunity for people of all ethnicities and races.

My work in a nonprofit is intended to make sure this still can happen.

Yes, there was racial tension, but it could have been managed.

People in Detroit are more welcoming that many people I've met elsewhere in metro Detroit.

1967 changed all that. The riots showed that we weren't wanted any more.

I realize that I might not have been wanted at my current work place, but my friend Erica made sure that the decision-makers in Detroit knew that I would be effective here.

Detroit became a violent, frightening place.

Detroit is challenged and challenging–especially economically–but I am not afraid here.

The blacks who took over trashed the city in every way.

I don't blame blacks for the troubles of the city.

We left because we had to.

I never lived in the city, and the location of my current home is based on the needs of my family.

Coleman Young was a disaster. Instead of healing divisions, he cut them deeper.

Professionally, I am trained in the new ideology of regionalism, and I think this approach has promise.

Now when we go back to our old neighborhoods, they may not even exist any more.

I can't relate because I don't have that problem of returning to something that's hard to recognize.

We might be willing to help Detroit, but we feel helpless.

I feel empowered in my work in Detroit.

The problems are huge, and Detroit doesn't seem to want white people any more.

I have been embraced in my work in Detroit.

5. "Jean's" Responses

We came to this country as slaves and endured centuries of oppression.

Yes, "oppression" is still a daily reality.

When we escaped slavery and Jim Crow in the South, we thought we were arriving in a promised land where good jobs were plentiful.

But a promised land is much more than a good-paying job.

The reality was different. Detroit really didn't want us.

 And I don't want Detroit.

The factory bosses mistreated us, and the citizens relegated us to the worst neighborhoods.

 Yes. I hate Henry Ford.

Racist harassment and violence met us any time we resisted (and often when we were just minding our own business).

 White people even today have no idea what discrimination feels like.

We vented our rage in the civil disturbances that white folks call riots.

 I vent my rage whenever white people still think that violence originates with blacks. Violence can happen any fucking place.

We elected our own mayor. We took over neighborhoods, and we took control of Detroit.

 Yes, we took control of Detroit, but Detroit wasn't really worth our effort.

You white folks ran away.

 My friend Candace was part of white flight, but I still want to engage her on issues of race.

Now when we have problems, you blame them on us, but that's just blaming the victim, and it's patently unjust.

 Yes, Detroit is rife with injustice.

 When I have my own problems, my friend Candace wants to fix them, but I demonstrate to her by example that just listening is best.

6. "Candace's" Responses

We built Detroit and it was a good place. The birth of the auto industry, the rise of the middle class through unionization: It all happened here.

 Detroit has never been such a good place. Being middle-class is much more than a middle-income.

Detroit was a hub of opportunity for people of all ethnicities and races.

 That whole opportunity thing is just flats, like a movie set.

Yes, there was racial tension, but it could have been managed.

 It's way more than racial tension. It's racial blindness, and I've spent at least half my adult life trying to see more clearly.

1967 changed all that. The riots showed that we weren't wanted any more.

 The black desire to oust white people was justified.

Detroit became a violent, frightening place.

 I've come to discover that I'm a suburban woman all the way, but Detroit does not scare me. I seriously considered living there with my friend Jean.

The blacks who took over trashed the city in every way.

 No, the trashing started long before with the "giants" of the auto industry.

We left because we had to.

 I left because my parents left.

Coleman Young was a disaster. Instead of healing divisions, he cut them deeper.
> **If he was a disaster, so were plenty of white autocrats along the way.**

Now when we go back to our old neighborhoods, they may not even exist any more.
> **I am not nostalgic about my old neighborhood. I love my suburban home. They will need to carry me out in a body bag.**

We might be willing to help Detroit, but we feel helpless.
> **"Helping" too often involves condescension. I am trying to swear off of fixing things as my first response. Jean is helping me with this.**

The problems are huge, and Detroit doesn't seem to want white people any more.
> **I am fine with staying away. I live and work in the suburbs. I try to open the minds of my white suburban students. My friend Jean does not always agree with the ways I try to do this.**

Certainly, there are many potential angles for analysis and multiple interpretations of these palimpsests. I invite readers are invited to make their own. I will limit myself to those that seem to say the most about the research question that guides this study: ***"What do the friendship narratives of black and white women in metro Detroit illustrate about the communicative construction of relationships that confront and span a historically significant social divide?"*** Specifically, in this context: *What do the co-constructed palimpsests from the stories of black and white women friends in metro Detroit say about how these women may have become successful friends, running counter to a metanarrative that features a socially constructed racial divide?*

First of all, we can see that none of the friends seems to have no idea what the metanarrative accounts are talking about. The accounts are not speaking in nearly indistinct languages or volumes. Unlike potential "conversation partners"–friends from other social locations presented with the same scripts–not one of the metro Detroit friends says the equivalent of, "Huh?" Moreover, I do not think that my will as a researcher/writer–the will that says the friends *should* interact with collective narratives that I have written–is the only incentive that

compels the friends' voices to continue the conversation. They have heard these narratives–or

fragments of them–multiple times during their years of living history in metro Detroit. They know

these scripts, and, in one way or another, they probably interact with them on a regular basis.

On the other hand, none of the friends' voices fully echoes the collective narratives. Not

surprisingly, friends that have co-constructed relational bridges over a relational divide have found

ways to "talk back" to what may be the locally situated "common sense" (in Linde's (1993) sense)

about racial history and relations. What material conditions, social locations within the larger

social landscape of metro Detroit, and communicative strategies might allow these friends the

agency to talk back to such powerful metanarrative accounts? First of all, I must admit that,

though I am no sociologist, material conditions and social locations must somehow come into

play. These are all women, after all, who have one or more university degrees. They have

engaged with diverse ideas and people, at least to some extent, by virtue of their education. They

have adequate or better means of transportation to traverse geographic/social boundaries in metro

Detroit, and some of them probably do so multiple times per day.

Furthermore, the discursive agency of Celia and Erica may benefit from their non-native

positionality. These two friends–interestingly, black friends–grew up elsewhere. Common sense,

at least, says that they have not imbibed the local metanarrative as much as metro Detroiters who

were socialized here as children and teens. Furthermore, Jynil and Kate have lived exclusively or

almost exclusively in suburban or exurban Detroit. These white friends would logically not take

metro Detroit history as personally–and feel its pain as deeply–as white friends who grew up in

Detroit and "fled" to the suburbs. Finally, most of the friends have had significant life experience

outside of metro Detroit, and that experience in itself might offer an objective distance from the metanarrative that is conducive to "talking back."

Taking these aspects of material and social conditions into consideration–though not full consideration, given the limitations of this research–how, specifically in terms of communication, do the friends exert their agency to talk back to such powerful metanarrative accounts (and I say "powerful" not because I am responsible for discursively expressing them, but because these accounts seem to be deeply embedded in collective memory and daily interaction in metro Detroit). First, the very anger and will to fight that seem native to metro Detroit are sometimes allies in communicative agency. "Celia's" statement that "white or black, no matter what it's called, violence is wrong" and "Jean's" adamant, "Violence can happen any fucking place" (which is close to verbatim from a transcript) stand out in this category. In metro Detroit and wherever metanarratives may be hostile to flourishing relationships across socially constructed difference, forceful discourse in rebuttal may be important to counternarrative.

Second, the voices of the friends find ways to personalize the history–not in the sense of taking on the whole burden of history as their own personal burden, but in the sense of taking the gist of a statement in the metanarrative accounts and applying it to a particular experience in their own lives. Several examples come to mind, but as a sampling:

1967 changed all that. The riots showed that we weren't wanted any more.
"Kate": I wasn't wanted in my first work place in Detroit as a social worker. I blew up one day at my co-workers. My friend Celia supported me.

The factory bosses mistreated us, and the citizens relegated us to the worst neighborhoods.
"Erica": One of my supervisors in Macomb County mistreated me. As for neighborhoods, I chose my own neighborhood, first in Detroit, and then close to Detroit. I

am **frustrated that integrated schools–which I value–aren't close to hardly any one's neighborhoods around here.**

The factory bosses mistreated us, and the citizens relegated us to the worst neighborhoods.
    "Jean": Yes. I hate Henry Ford.

The responses may seem a bit "out of touch" with the collective accounts, but I intuit that

responding only obliquely to the collective voice is a strategy that, if the friends actually use it in

practice, might serve them and their friendships well. The personalizing of just a part of the

metanarrative account and the refusal to accept the whole fallout of metro Detroit history allows

them to proceed with the business of successful social competency and bridge-building friendship.

They do not accept the full burden of history, but they do accept some role that is manageable for

an individual. They talk back to the "ghost" of metro Detroit's racial history in a different register,

and so the haunting voice has less power in their social experiences.

       Especially significant to this study is another discursive strategy evident in the palimpsests:

invoking solidarity with the friend in order to counter the metanarratives. Not surprisingly, since I

know the friends in the contexts of their friendships and I am representing their voices, at least

fourteen of the responses directly invoke the presence of the friend. For example:

You white folks ran away.
    "Celia": I wouldn't say that my friend Kate ran away, but I do wish she and her family lived closer.

We might be willing to help Detroit, but we feel helpless.
    "Kate": I don't feel helpless. Like I said, I may choose to work in Detroit once I finish seminary. It will be great to have at least part of my life closer to my friend Celia.

We elected our own mayor. We took over neighborhoods, and we took control of Detroit.

"Erica": I'm not into control, but I understand people who are. When the Detroit powers-that-be didn't want an outsider's intervention in a Detroit nonprofit, I advocated for my friend Jynil.

1967 changed all that. The riots showed that we weren't wanted any more.
"Jynil": I realize that I might not have been wanted at my current work place, but my friend Erica made sure that the decision-makers in Detroit knew that I would be effective here.

You white folks ran away.
"Jean": My friend Candace was part of white flight, but I still want to engage her on issues of race.

We might be willing to help Detroit, but we feel helpless.
"Candace": "Helping" too often involves condescension. I am trying to swear off of fixing things as my first response. Jean is helping me with this.

Here we see the friends enlisting one another in talking back to the metanarrative accounts in

metro Detroit. Just as with the personalized responses, these sometimes sound off-key in relation

to the metanarratives. Invoking a friend may not be the expected conversational turn (if these

conversations were occurring in "real time"). But that's the point. Invoking a friend makes a

dialogue–where the individual voice might seem weak in contrast to the voice of an entire social

location–into something of a conversation. The friend is part of the discussion, and she

contributes to the agency of the individual voice. Certainly readers could contend that, had the

friends actually been conversing with the voice of a collective account, they might not have

invoked the friend so explicitly or so often. However, the friend would be there, a friendly shadow

at least. The friends are too invested in each other's lives for their presence not to make a

difference in the conversation with the local metanarrative. That difference is greater force in

talking back than an individual would have alone.

Lest it seem that I am overly valorizing friendship–and these three friendships in particular–as discursive champions in a match against powerful collective narratives (and this temptation has indeed been a pervasive one for me), I need to point out an important way in which the palimpsests do *not* counter the metanarrative accounts. In this case, the palimpsests directly reflect the social and geographic landscape of metro Detroit.

Let me explain. In the palimpsests, as I mentioned, I wrote the friends' responses quickly and freely; I seemed to know intuitively what they might say. For most responses, their statements are direct quotes, paraphrases, or distillations of several statements that the friends made during our interviews. However, I heard nothing–almost nothing–about why the friends live where they do. The silence was severe; though none of the interview questions asked specifically about why they live where they do, plenty of moments in our conversations would have allowed for the friends to talk about this topic. I needed to fill in the blanks left by the silence. So, for instance, these responses are, for the most part, only educated guesses about what the friends would say:

We left because we had to.
"Kate": I never lived there so I never left. I do admit that I've gradually moved further away from the city limits. The reason for moving is that it seemed best for my family.

We left because we had to.
"Jynil": I never lived in the city, and the location of my current home is based on the needs of my family.

We left because we had to.
"Candace": I left because my parents left.

I honestly do not know what the friends' explanations are for why they live in the precise locations that they do. I know that Celia and her husband consider their home in Davis Park to be their

"dream house," but I don't know why or if this suburb just outside of Detroit is important to the dream. I know that Candace considers herself to be a suburban person, but I don't know why Worthy is her suburb of choice. I assume that Candace left the city only because her parents did (the migration took place when she was only nine), but she never said as much. I do not know why Jean continues to live in Detroit; she says she is an "urban person," but some of the older suburbs have an urban feel, and I do not know why she does not move to one of them. This is especially puzzling since she speaks adamantly about how she does not like Detroit. Since Kate and Jynil are obviously devoted to their families, I assume that the collective interests and desires of the nuclear family unit are what settle them so far away from the city limits. In fact, all three pairs of friends–for whatever reasons–replicate the geographic pattern of racial segregation metro Detroit: All three white friends live in outer-ring suburbs or exurban areas, while all three black friends live either in Detroit or in inner-ring suburbs. Travel time between the homes of the friends is at least half an hour to upwards of an hour, depending on traffic.

This replication of the prevailing pattern of racial segregation–this lack of defiance of the metro Detroit metanarrative–was and is a puzzlement to me in the research process. Why would such good friends choose to live so far away from each other? And not just far away from each other, but in some of their residential locations, they are also very far from convenient locations to meet additional friends of another racial group. All of the friends obviously practice communicative skills that are conducive to friendships across difference. All of them have at least one resoundingly successful interracial friendship. They all profess a desire for family members to have interracial friends as well. How is it, then, that the friendships replicate the local pattern of

segregation? How is it that, for some of the friends, arguably the most significant kind of racial segregation–residential segregation–is their daily experience? And why do the friends, for the most part, keep silence on such matters?

I realize that these questions are requests for information (in the formal linguistic sense I have used as a frame in the preceding analysis). The are requests that were not directly explicit in the research protocols; probably they are also challenges. Perhaps during the research process the friends mostly kept silence about these questions as a matter of facework: They were protecting their friends' faces and their relational face by not addressing this potentially difficult topic. I hesitate to fill in their blanks any more than I have already done, but acknowledging my only partial, tentative knowledge of these friendships, I continue in the spirit of the palimpsests. How *might* the friends reply to questions about why they are not talking back to the metanarrative in this case? A few possibilities:

–As I intuited in the palimpsests, a complex decision-making process involving several family members places them in their specific geographic locations in metro Detroit. What they may desire as individuals has not taken top priority. They are replicating a common sense notion in this culture: Family takes precedence over friends (Rubin, 1985).

–Relatedly, the notion of moving closer does not register in any significant way. They might not have even considered it. People just don't *do* that (especially in metro Detroit).

–Again, relatedly, perhaps because the friends met at work (or a work-related university course), the notion of community as an important location for interacting easily with current friends and as a potential location to meet new diverse friends is not a consideration that looms large.

Although these explanations seem reasonable, they are not entirely satisfying. I suspect that the "ghost" of metro Detroit's racial history–the ghost who always speaks of "a something to be

done" (Gordon, 2008) is speaking in some mysterious way through these common sense notions and also perhaps even more compellingly as it hovers over particular communities–maybe even specific blocks or houses–ominously shaking its head and warning, "Don't move here. You'll have a fight on your hands."

Candace and Jean experienced a window of time when they were able to engage the ghost. They, of all three pairs, gave me the clearest view of how the ghost speaks when metro Detroiters decide where to live. Both friends were single during this window of opportunity, and they briefly considered sharing a place in Detroit. Here is how it played out:

Jean: Candace . . . is living the middle-class lifestyle in Worthy, and she says, "Wa-oh, Jean knows all about this. We could come together and really make this work!" and she was talking about doing things to the house or selling the house and buying another other house, and I was like, "Whoah. Time out!"

Candace: You're doing the project thing again, girl!

Jean: And then she moved to, "Well, if you still wanna live in the city [

Marcia: [So she was volunteering to help you fix a place up?

Jean: No! No! She was doin,' she was volunteering to put me in a better environment. [C: _laughter_]

Marcia: OK, OK.

Candace: Though I don't know that I ever articulated it in quite that fashion.

Jean: Right. She didn't but it, it was, it was written in loud letters. And I said, "But, Candace, I'm really an urban person. I'm not a suburban person."

Marcia: So you felt like the betterment project had to do with more suburban.

Jean: Right, right, but quickly she said, "I'll move into the city. I'll sell the house then use that money and I could buy . . . a condo . . . . We even looked at them. . . . Now I'm thinking, you love to garden, you . . . love your cats and I like them when I visit, but I don't know if I really want to live with them. [All: _laughter_] You know, you, you love this suburban experience, and I'm not gonna feed this moving into the city for the two of us to live together because if something goes wrong, I don't ever want it to be "You did this for me."

Marcia: Ah, OK.

Jean: What was your take on that?

Candace: Well, once again in my own unique fashion I was sort of oblivious to the undercurrents. I would never, it is not in my nature to, if something were to go wrong to point fingers: "I did this for you," and I think you know me well enough now to know that that would not be the case.

Jean: Yeah, but I would feel it even if you never said it, and it may be my, my own thing [to say . . .

Candace: [I think it's your own thing.

Jean: "If you still lived in the suburbs, this would never have happened to you," you know, if you were the white woman that was mugged, I would be [*makes a slamming sound with her hand*] kinda she had just stayed in her [C: *laughter*] this never would have happened to her.

Candace: [*laughing*] Stay out there in your little white world everything would have been fine.

Jean: Right, it's the black man's burden [C: *laughter*]. Any crime that's committed, we're [J: *nonverbal implying "implicated"*; C: *laughter*]   (Interview #1, ll. 310-327, 330, 335, 337-357)

"It was written in loud letters . . . Stay out there in your little white world everything would have been fine." Sounds to me like the loud letters, the voice of the premonition (*"If you still lived in the suburbs, this would never have happened to you"*) are the work of the ghost. The ghost says, *fight*, and, like Jean, we may fight even our friends to keep them and ourselves safe.

Gordon (2008) differentiates between "Slavery" and "slavery" (p. 141). The pervasive social ill, the "ghost," is in upper case, while the lower case denotes the ways that the larger problem plays out in everyday experience, even after the social ill may seem to be relegated to history. Applying an upper-case/lower-case dynamic to the friends' stories set within the metanarrative of metro Detroit, the friends have transcended small-case segregation in their relationships, but upper-case Segregation in metro Detroit still affects them in other ways.

In conclusion, I will offer a more hopeful word. After all, as I have illustrated in this chapter, the friends do mostly counter the local metanarrative in their communicatively co-

constructed friendships. The more hopeful word is this: *connection.* The friendship connection

is one that influences a network. The palimpsests invoke connections with others besides the

friends, reflecting many instances in the interview transcripts where the friends mention others

who somehow connect to their connection: spouses, partners, children and grandchildren,

extended family, neighbors, members of religious communities, people involved in the volunteer

work of the friends, supervisors, colleagues, clients, students. The friends had varying opinions

when I asked about how significant the impact would be if there were more friendships of their

kind in metro Detroit, but one thing is certain: Their connection as friends affects many others in

metro Detroit. The social landscape, the racial metanarrative, the collective memory–none of

these will transform easily or quickly, certainly not through small-scale counternarratives or the

communicative skills of a few friends. But the relational histories of the friends are a testimony to

significant others, and the relational skills of the friends can be emulated. If those others are

actually watching, listening, and at least some times emulating, the ripple effects of the connection

between these friends may increase the volume to counter the ghost. When the ghost says *Fight*, a

larger contingent, inspired by the spirit of a friendship connection, may say, *No*.

IX. CONCLUSION

Even separate islands are connected by some sea
and we are sisters touching the waters

of our disparate lives, singing our untold stories
in a harmony of undulating waves.
                    –from "Connected Islands" by Detroit poet Naomi Long Madgett (2004, p. 2)

Summary

This dissertation is a representation of how and why and to what effect six women–three

pairs of black and white friends–sang their untold stories in metro Detroit. I was privileged to hear

the harmony of those stories and will briefly recount the research journey that led me to those

"undulating waves."

Experiencing racial tension when I first moved to the Grosse Pointe/Detroit border, I

decided to find long-term metro Detroit residents who had apparently overcome this tension

successfully enough to become good friends with at least one person of the racial group that is

typically framed in oppositional terms in this social location. As a feminist, I was interested in

women's friendships, and so I settled on pursuing an ethnographically-inflected, interview-based

case study of three pairs of friends, seeking to answer the question, ***What do the friendship***

narratives of black and white women in metro Detroit illustrate about the communicative

construction of relationships that confront and span a historically significant social divide?

I met the friends featured in this study through the contacts that I had developed during my

years of ethnographically-mindful acquaintance in metro Detroit. The friends completed an

introductory questionnaire, met together to complete a guided discussion (Our Friendship Story),

and met twice with me for interviews based on their responses to Our Friendship Story. I recorded and transcribed these interviews.

The chapters on the three friendships (Chapters V-VII) introduce the women and illustrate some of the communicatively co-constructed practices that seem especially fruitful in the initiation and maintenance of friendships across socially constructed difference. Examples of such practices are perspective-taking, humor, and metadiscourse. The bulk of these chapters consisted in the representation and analysis of a featured narrative for each friendship pair. The analytic lens was structural, using an adaptation of the narrative grammar developed by William Labov and others. Using this lens, I offered analysis on the levels of the content of the narratives, their interactional features, and their social context in metro Detroit.

In the featured narrative for Celia and Kate ("Jamaica Changed Everything"), I found that the friends experienced this trip–which was, significantly, very far from metro Detroit–as a bonding experience that led them to identify as sister-friends who could transcend future gaps in time, distance (as they left a common work place and moved further away from each other in metro Detroit), and roles. Interactionally, I discovered that I as a researcher felt lost at first in understanding the Impliculture (Nair, 2003) of this narrative and the communicative practices of this friendship. To make my way toward understanding, I needed to tell a narrative of my own.

In Erica and Jynil's narrative ("The Best Night"), the friends co-constructed the narrative of a spiritual journey in which they both affirmed the identity of the other. Jynil was laudably persistent, while Erica was remarkably supportive. Their success story played onto the foil of my reflexivity about how my own support across interfaith difference might not have been as

unflinching as Erica's, and yet I was able, through supportive listening, to serve as a receptive audience for this narrative. The fact that the friends affirmed one another's identities so emphatically in the context of an interfaith experience at a location that might be considered "hostile turf" for many African American metro Detroiters (the Catholic parish deep in an outer-ring suburb) highlighted the positivity and the degree of commitment that the Erica and Jynil share.

In Jean and Candace's narrative ("Le Car"), I found that a narrative that frames the featured narrative, namely, the ongoing conflict over Candace's refusal to read an academic book on race and Detroit, offered additional significance to the Le Car resolution. Although the friends resolved the conflict in Le Car by surfacing racial and relational identity work and concluding that Candace did *not* consider Jean to be "a project," the saga of the unread book continues. Again, my own researcher narrative served as a foil; in this case, the intrapersonal communication recalled less than successful interaction in my own past friendship across difference. Of the three featured narratives, Jean and Candace's engaged the social context of metro Detroit in the most explicit way. Le Car was a repudiation of the history and communicative practices that were embodied when the mechanic failed even to look at Jean while he and Candace were discussing Jean's car.

Taking an interpretive turn toward more global analysis of the internal workings of the featured narratives, the larger stories of the friends, and their context within the metanarrative of Detroit, Chapter VIII offered another adaptation of Labovian analysis and a look at the impact of collective memory as it is theorized by Gordon (2008). First of all, I analyzed each featured narrative as request and/or challenge based on Labov's work with narratives that end in violence

(1981) and therapeutic discourse (Labov & Fanshell, 1977), applying the rules of request and challenge to the deep discursive structure of each narrative. In the featured narratives for Celia and Kate and for Erica and Jynil, I demonstrated how their implied requests in those narratives were met with eager compliance, thus strengthening both friendships. In Le Car, I described how the danger of a challenge was successfully resolved through dialogue, but Jean and Candace are nevertheless continuing in unresolved conflict over the unread academic book about Detroit.

Throughout the request/challenge analysis of the deeper structure of the narratives, I traced the ways in which the friends both resist and conform to the Detroit metanarrative, which I am claiming is animated by a will to fight. In the final section of Chapter VIII, I move in an even more global direction of intersubjectivity/intertextuality by employing the palimpsest, which includes several layers of text by several authors. I returned to the collective stories that, according to my ethnographically-inflected perceptions of metro Detroit, inform the hostile race relations that typify this social landscape. I superimposed upon these collective narratives the responses that I intuited each of the six friends might offer, basing my representations of their voices on my experiences of coming to know the friends in a research context.

These palimpsests revealed many strategies for "talking back" to the collective accounts of racial history in metro Detroit. The represented voices of the friends confront the racial divide by responding with personalizing statements (rather than statements that allow generalizations to stand), denials, and invocations of the presence of the friend. If indeed the friends in daily interaction "talk back" in such ways to the racial narratives of metro Detroit, they are enacting a small-scale success story that enables them to co-construct friendships across difference and, at

least to some extent, resist the metro Detroit metanarrative.   At the same time, the palimpsests

revealed a silence in the interviews, a lack of voluntary communication about why the friends

chose their residential locations. All three friends live at a significant distance from each other; all

three pairs replicate the local geographic stereotype: African Americans live in Detroit or the

inner-ring suburbs, while whites live in outer-ring suburbs and exurban areas. Although the

friends' silence on their residential choices may have indicated a current lack of

discursive/embodied strategies to "talk back" to the metanarrative on this significant topic, their

overall willingness both to engage and resist the metanarrative–often invoking the presence of

potentially supportive others–offered a window upon promising communicative strategies that

others might emulate.

<div align="center">Contributions of This Study</div>

Several of this study's contributions to conversations within the field of

communication–and possibly beyond–are methodological. The first interactive stage of the

research design, Our Friendship Story, was a unique method for privileging insider interpretations,

allowing the friends to begin by engaging the research goals on a more equal playing field in terms

of power relations, and possibly setting the stage for the kind of rapport and trust that made the

interviews so interactively lively. The friends contributed many fascinating relational narratives in

a relatively short period of time, and perhaps this generous output was partly possible because the

friends "hit the ground running" in the first interview after Our Friendship Story. Certainly I came

into the first interview feeling like I already knew the friends to some extent, based on their

responses to Our Friendship Story. I was ready to open a friendly discussion with them, not based

entirely on my own interests, but at least partly on theirs. Our Friendship Story followed to good effect the recommendation of Gaines and Ickes (1997), who advocate the privileging of insider understandings of identity and communicative practices when studying relationships across racial difference.

Second, this research makes a unique contribution to the field of communication by studying interracial friendship using data from three-person interaction. In a culture that celebrates individualism and where even relationship research often privileges individual perceptions, this research has attempted to privilege dialogue, to "celebrate the other" (Sampson, 1993). The research data consisted primarily of the conversational interaction of the friends. The study offered a small, though significant window into how the friends may interact under naturally occurring conditions. As such, it answers a call by Ellis (1998) to study relational narratives via the mediation of a communication researcher (rather than, for instance, unmediated research in which one or both of the relational partners are professors or graduate students). This friendship study also extends the work of Veroff, Sutherland, Chadiha and Ortega (1993), who used a quantitative social science paradigm to study interracial marriages through three-person interviews. The difference, of course, is that this dissertation research studies friendships using an interpretive paradigm, but with the same fruitful concentration on three-person interaction.

"Black and White Do Not Make Grey" is also a study that makes a methodological and analytic contribution through its attention to particular women doing friendship in a specific social location. With McCullough (1998), I have offered my best attempt "as a White feminist woman scholar, to represent the participants in their own words, not as essentialized Black and White

women, but as individuals with complex histories and complex friendships situated in times and places" (p. 188; upper-case in original). In this study's ethnographic attention to metro Detroit and situated notions of race, it offers a view of how friends may do identity work and how their talk–in explicit and implicit ways–may invoke collective memory and the contours of a local social landscape. Friendship and race are not generic concepts. They arise in social locations, and my attempt to demonstrate the relationship between the friends' narratives and the metanarrative of Detroit contributes to the conversation with Hartigan (1999) and other researchers who have studied how communicative practices are enabled and constrained by their embeddedness in a specific place and time.

Additional methodological/analytic contributions include a unique application of narrative grammar (Labov, 1972, 1981; Labov & Fanshel, 1977; Labov & Waletzky, 1967) to the featured narratives of the friends, with an openness to the researcher's role in supplying features of the narrative grammar. This study demonstrated that the researcher is potentially more than an interested listener to a narrative, but a contributor of significant elements of narrative grammar. Labov's research on requests and challenges (Labov, 1981; Labov & Fanshel, 1977) also received a unique adaptation in that I analyzed the underlying requests, challenges and their responses in the featured narratives. This analysis deepened the understandings gained through narrative grammar by revealing additional layers of relational face and identity work.

Finally, the use of palimpsests (following from Gordon, 2008), provided a lens for analysis of the intertextuality/intersubjectivity between a metanarrative and the participants at a research site. The six palimpsests in Chapter VIII, one for each friend, offer responses to the "stock

narratives" (Yamamoto, 1999) of racial history in metro Detroit. The palimpsests reveal much about how the friends may be able and unable to "talk back" to the prevailing metanarrative. Although the friends' responses to the collective accounts within the metanarrative were only my representations of what they might say, these representations were based on extensive experience with each friend, and in most cases reflected statements that they made during interviews.

If the friends actually such strategies in daily interaction (not just in the palimpsests), as I intuit they do, then this literary device offers important insights about how metanarratives may be communicatively resisted (for example, by employing personalizing statements, denials, and invocations of the presence of a friend or other significant ally). In this study, the palimpsests also provided a potential window into the silences of the friends about common sense notions regarding residential choices in metro Detroit. Linde (1993) writes that such common sense notions are unmarked systems (which participants at a site may or may not believe in as individuals), and, as such, they are difficult if not impossible for insiders in a culture to articulate, since they are so deeply and inextricably woven into identity. In this study, then, the palimpsests may have revealed hidden codes in the silences about what seem like "natural" patterns for residential choices in metro Detroit.

Another methodological/analytic contribution of this study is its illustration of the autoethnographic involvement of the researcher. At every turn of this process, I attempted a kind of reflective reflexivity that inflects the representation of this research. A very personal investment in this research site led me to the dissertation topic. A very palpable gap (my own lack of friendship at this site) led me to listen to the stories of women who had filled this gap in a very

satisfying way. I allowed myself to be both listener and participant in the stories and narratives of the friends; they were generous enough and their friendships expansive enough to allow me this role. The analysis is clearly, unabashedly a subjective work. The epistemology is personal. Through and through, I am representing the friends–as faithfully as I can–in the ways that they represented themselves to me.

As a reflexive researcher–invested and represented at every turn in this study–I have attempted a balancing act, and the extent to which I have been successful (the reader may judge for her/himself) is a contribution of this study. Apple (1998) identifies an attendant danger for scholars who study whiteness, which is a lapse into individualism and narcissism. Apple writes that writing about whiteness

> can serve the chilling function of simply saying, "but enough about you, let me tell you
>
> about me." Unless we are very careful and reflexive, it can still wind up privileging the
>
> white, middle-class woman's or man's need for self-display. (p. xi)

In writing about interracial friendship, I have felt this temptation to center "self-display" rather display of the friendships. Hopefully, for the most part I have stayed balanced on a tight-rope: willing to serve as "human instrument" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of the methods and analysis of this project without privileging my own experiences at the expense of those of the friends.

Other contributions of this research are more centered upon the daily praxis of interracial friendship. In specific ways, I have answered this study's research question: **What do the friendship narratives of black and white women in metro Detroit illustrate about the**

communicative construction of relationships that confront and span a historically significant social divide?

This case study has illustrated specific communicative practices that seem to be especially helpful to the relational life of friendship that spans social difference. Such practices as perspective-taking, a willingness to engage in metadiscourse and extended discussion to reach consensus, advocacy, empathetic listening, and humor are all strategies that have benefitted these friends and may be emulated by others in friendship.

This research has also offered detailed analysis of friendship narratives that orient the interracial friends toward a "friends like family" identity. In the featured narratives of Celia and Kate and Erica and Jynil, we see and hear interaction that establishes them as sister-friends. This identity is especially helpful in several ways:

1. It provides a bond that holds the friends together over space and time, which is important in any relationship where voluntariness is a key characteristic. As Rubin (1985) states, "If we can be chosen, we can also be "*un*chosen" (p. 23; italics in the original). This sister bond has been especially important as the friends have changed work places, roles, and residences in metro Detroit.

2. It prompts a long-term commitment for friends who do not look alike in the racial terms that are especially relevant in certain social landscapes. These friends need to negotiate on a daily basis with a social landscape that includes co-constructed borders where black is marked on one side, and white on the other. Whether the friends are apart or together in any location on this social landscape, their sisterhood allows them to continue to identify with each other.

3. It honors the positive role enactments that researchers have identified for African American women. Houston and Scott (2006) and Hill (2003), for instance, illustrate how black women may communicatively assert positive identity representations such as the supportive sister and the universal maternal nurturer (the latter of which was notable in the Celia and Kate narrative) in order to negotiate intercultural relationships. The featured friendship narratives of Celia and Kate ("Jamaica Changed Everything") and Erica and Jynil ("The Best Night") illustrate how positive identity representations for black women are enacted, with white friends co-constructing these roles.

The featured narratives, then, illustrate the friends doing identity work to bridge a socially constructed racial divide. Together, they enact positive racial roles typically associated with black women, forge a friends-as-family identity, affirm one another's positive qualities, and negotiate racial identity (most explicitly evident with Jean and Candace).

Rather than conforming to the script of the local metanarrative, the friends do not engage in conflict that contributes to entrenched hostility. As demonstrated in Chapter VIII, they negotiate requests and challenges with relationally successful outcomes. When they fight, they typically fight on the same side. Their negotiations with conflict or potential conflict result in affirmations of their status as friends rather than lowered esteem.

Although this research is a small-scale case study focused on communicative practices in interaction, it has also made a contribution to the much larger conversation about racial healing. The friends and I pondered the question: "What might this area look like if there were more friendships like yours?" Their answers varied greatly, with Erica and Jynil the most hopeful about

transformative possibilities, while Jean and Candace were the least hopeful, recognizing the small-scale impact of one relationship, or even many personal relationships. Celia and Kate took the middle ground on the optimism/pessimism spectrum (interestingly, they are also the middle pair in terms of the demographic feature of age). Scholars of peace and conflict, however, see a hopeful sign in every friendship pair. Schirch (2001), for instance, claims that individuals from opposing groups in long-term conflict who have been able to forge the greatest sense of shared identity are the ones who are the most equipped to foster "peaceful coexistence in their regions" and "form crosscutting groups to break down the psychological walls that perpetuate conflict" (p. 152). Indeed, the level of the personal relationship may be a key strand to co-construct a web of healing in sites where long-term ethnic/racial conflict has riven the social landscape. Rasmussen (2001) states that in such social locations, where the focus has often been on formal negotiations between hostile parties, a more holistic approach is important. He writes:

> [R]elationship building and reconciliation must take place on an intrapersonal level, at an interpersonal level, and on an intergroup level. Relationship building and reconciliation are therefore multifaceted concerns of both the public and private realms over an extended period of time (p. 116).

Although the "big picture" of blight, despair, systemic oppression and hostility often cloud the horizon for even the most hopeful metro Detroiters, friendships may be an important focus of attention, even a starting place. They form the link between the intrapersonal and intergroup level of interaction; they stand at the intersection of public and private.

Finally, I hope–and I believe that the friends do, too–that readers of this dissertation and any forthcoming publications that extend its representative reach will take what they will and apply it in some way to their own relationships. The friends, after all, have offered us much to ponder in their stories and narratives. Their co-constructed communicative practices and narrative identity work offer an invitation to emulate–or even resist–similar co-construction of our own. Burke (1941/1973) writes that literature can be "equipment for living." If we choose, we may take the stories and narratives of the friends as interactive "literature," and as such, what the friends have done and said may provide axioms or models for our own doing and saying.

Limitations of This Study

My own role as "human instrument" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) in this research has been both a strength of the project and a limitation. As just one researcher (a white, middle-class woman who is still a relative newcomer to metro Detroit), my perspective was limited by lack of collaboration with those more experienced–both as scholars and as long-terms residents–in this social world. I made attempts, some of them successful, to collaborate with others who share similar interests in this social landscape, but the perspective of the work is predominantly individual. Partly, this is simply how a dissertation works in academe–it is a one-person project–but a greater degree of co-construction would have offered additional or heightened insights into the stories and narratives of the friends as well as the metanarrative of metro Detroit. Especially I have grieved the fact that this study was not doable in this time, place and in textual genre (the dissertation) as an interracial team.

Furthermore, as the "human instrument" at this site, I was able to manage an ethnographically-inflected, interview-based case study, but not an ethnography *per se.* A more full-fledged ethnography would have added layers of interpretation that were not possible in the study as it actually evolved. First of all, I was not willing to let my entire experience in metro Detroit become overwhelmed by ethnographic interest. I wanted to live here as well as work here. I didn't want every potential friendship and cultural experience in my new home to be overshadowed with theoretical constructs and obligatory field notes. (Even with some sense of boundary between personal and professional life, I often feel ill-at-ease when talking with potential African American friends about my dissertation; will they think that they might become nothing more than a "project"?) So I concentrated on three friendships rather than many. I considered dyads rather than networks. I wrote fruitful but not prolific field notes. My reflective/reflexive writing about the research site fell silent and only resumed intermittently after my husband's death. I was thinking and writing about other things. Serious field notes resumed only once I reached the interview process. Overall, I attempted to turn on and off the researcher "switch" of my time and attention, with only partial success. That partial success is an integral part of the contributions and limitations of this work.

An obvious limitation of this research is that the three pairs of friends are very similar–both as relational pairs and as a group. The friends are like one another in nearly every demographic sense–e.g., age, sexual orientation, education, professional affiliation–except for ethnic/racial identity. All six friends, as a group, enjoy middle-class status. Even when Jean says that she is consciously disavowing middle-class values, she does so by her own agency as a middle-class,

well-educated woman. The research design–especially Our Friendship Story–required fairly advanced literacy, and I recognized this limitation as I began the study. Had I been able to include participants of a wider socioeconomic diversity as in McCullough's (1998) study, a greater variety of shared activities and practices of narrative co-construction might have been represented by this research. However, a case study with a limited demographic range can offer depth instead of breadth, and so the stories and narratives of the six friends did offer some interesting points of comparison and contrast in the ways that middle-class women in metro Detroit co-construct friendship. Furthermore, to compensate in part for this limitation, I consciously attempted (and was at least partially successful) in recruiting participants who offered other kinds of diversity. For example, the group of six does offer significant variation in age, (non)religious affiliations, professional training and employment, native versus non-native status in metro Detroit, and methods of entry into the study.

Another limitation is the exclusive focus of this study on black/white relational pairs. My personal and professional conscience has been pricked many times by the possible reification of what seems to be a national obsession: the legacy of slavery's binary opposition of black/white identity. Frankenberg (1993) is just one scholar who touches this point: "Racist discourse [of whites], I suggest, frequently accords a hypervisibility to African Americans and a relative *invisibility* to Asian American and Native Americans; Latinos are also relatively less visible than African Americans in discursive terms (p. 12; italics in original). Certainly I have not intended to contribute to racist or oppressive discourse by concentrating specifically on black/white friendships, and I hope that I have demonstrated the complexity of and deviations from the binary

even in a social location where it seems so pervasively reified by discourse. I have studied race in terms of African and European American identity simply because these social constructions are so salient in metro Detroit. Hopefully, this study has something to say in the conversation about other kinds of interracial relationships as well.

Finally, the focus on narrative–and on three featured narratives–is both a strength and a limitation of this study. Because I featured three narratives for in-depth analysis, several fascinating narratives needed to be omitted from this work. Narrative discourse that did not display full narrative structure and conversation that relied on narrative logic (rather than qualifying as "storytelling" *per se)*–though interesting and potentially fruitful in understanding the relationships of the friends–was not represented in these findings. Furthermore, other features of discourse, additional genres, speech acts, and aspects of nonverbal communication were not considered in depth or at all. I found myself very interested, for instance, in the friends' explicit and implicit advice, their balance of talk, use of reported speech and interruptions, their limited use of code-switching, as well as nonverbal features such as throat-clearing, laughter, pauses, and variations in volume and rate. All of these must await further research in order to be represented and analyzed in any depth. The narrative focus concealed them, or at least minimized their role in this study's analysis of how friendships are co-constructed across a racial divide. The narrative focus did reveal much–and thus fulfilled the purpose for which I chose it–but it also concealed much.

<div align="center">Suggestions for the Future</div>

A number of possibilities for future research arise out of the limitations of this study. For example, a collaborative study by an interracial academic partnership or team would add significant layers of insight about interracial friends. Perhaps the partners/team could work sequentially, with one researcher taking the lead in an early phase of the project, and another in a latter phase. Or a partnership or team could facilitate interviews with one or more friendship pairs or lead a focus group with a network of friends. More voices in the conversation and/or a wider interest in interracial friendship beyond dyads would add to the richness of understanding about how friends do communicative co-construction of their relationships.

Of course I recommend a full ethnography featuring friendship. I also recommend additional case studies. Narrative inquiry into black/white interracial friendships with different demographic characteristics (not all middle-class, for instance) would lead to important points of comparison/contrast. The interaction of pairs from different racial/ethnic groups needs scholarly attention; in metro Detroit, for instance, a study of Arab American/European American friendships in Dearborn (a city that had a long-time mayor who made segregationist statements and now has a large Arab American population) would be especially interesting.

As a general principle, I view this study as a recommendation to study relationships in interaction and in the context of their social/cultural setting. Though the logistics and analysis of such work is complex, I have seen for myself how communicative practices are evident in the interactive moment, and relationships are fruitfully analyzed *in situ* rather than as objectively generalizable entities. Thus I recommend any research design for studying relationships that privileges interactive data in a specific social location.

I also recommend research that looks further inward rather than outward–in the direction of the formation of racial identity. I wrote in my field journal about the development of my own racial identity and attempted a reflexive analysis that was attuned to that identity in this study, but narratives of racial identity–of both researcher and participants–could be foregrounded in a study of interracial friendship. Both McCullough (1998) and Rawlins (2009) note the importance of individual racial identity to a cross-race friendship. With the six friends I interviewed, I received clues that the development of their individual racial identities was important to their initiation of friendship, their relational practices, and the success of their relationships. Certainly questions of how individual identity formation may shape relational identity formation are worth asking and answering.

Additional analysis is possible in the future with the research data set from the metro Detroit friends (or a similar one). Other discursive genres (besides narrative), speech acts, or nonverbal features of the friends' stories and narratives would offer additional promising avenues for analysis. The narratives and stories of the friends could be analyzed in terms of redemption and contamination sequences (McAdams & Bowman, 2001) or in the additional ways that they resist or conform to cultural common sense (following Linde, 1993, & Nair, 2003). The well-worn adage, "A friend is some one who is there for you" strikes me as a statement of cultural common sense that the friends both affirm and transform in their relationships.

Since the friends all insisted that race was not a deciding factor in why they became friends and it only arose explicitly in one of the three featured narratives ("Le Car"), I chose not to consider race *per se* in analysis, but to consider it in terms of the Le Car narrative and in the

context of the ways that it is embedded in the metanarrative of Detroit.[31] However, the friends do

talk about race, both when interview questions invoke it and when they do not. They seem to have

found a middle ground in race talk, not choosing the "color-blind" discursive option, but

respecting race as an important part of the friend's identity, though not the central part. Tracing

these subtle discursive moves in the race talk of the friends would make for another interesting

research direction.

Similarly, though I have identified co-constructed "provisions of friendship" (Rawlins,

1992)–communication practices such as perspective taking, metadiscourse, and humor–which

seem conducive to the health of interracial friendships, the rigorous pursuit of *how* and *why* these

practices might be especially helpful has been outside the scope of this study. Such an analysis

might make a helpful contribution to both theory and praxis in the field of communication.

An important line for further research will be to continue the conversation about how

intrapersonal, interpersonal, and intergroup relationships connect to one another. In metro Detroit

and elsewhere, systemic injustice, material and discursive roadblocks to the flourishing of healthy

communities, and centuries of "haunting" (Gordon, 2008) from oppressive practices have left us

with problems that seem too gargantuan to solve. Despair, flight, or a resort to endemic hostility

often seem like the only options. However, when interpersonal and peace/conflict scholars

collaborate in order to understand best/worst communicative practices within and between levels

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[31]In this sense, my research findings differed significantly from those of McCullough
(1998), who found that race was a significant part of the relationships and discursive practices of
her participants. One item of "news" in the current study is that there is "no news"; the friends
in this study seem to practice friendship in many of the same ways as more homogeneous
friends.

of social strata, more ways to "talk back" to the "ghost" might be available to individuals and groups who want (and need) to work toward improved ways of seeking a common good.

I cannot forecast whether or not I will be able to pursue additional research that is situated in metro Detroit, but a few intriguing possibilities come to mind, possibilities that would also be interesting in other metro areas. I would like to see research, for instance, on the white people who stayed during the era of the most dramatic white flight in Detroit. Their stories are important. Once when I said something about the "racial pain" of African Americans in Detroit who watched white neighbors flee, my husband said something like, "Yes, but we had a lot of pain, too." The "we" in his reference are the European Americans who stayed. His family, for instance, was one of the few who stayed when white flight took most of their neighbors away in another metro area in Michigan. They learned to negotiate and enjoy the new social landscape, but the process was far from easy.

Other important possibilities for interracial friendship research (between black/white friends or other racial combinations) in metro Detroit include analysis of the stories and narratives of friends who grew up together as friends, those who are significantly different in age/life stage from the participants in this study, and friends who have little or no life experience outside of metro Detroit. The first two possibilities are intriguing to me based on a practice interview graciously granted to me by Kourtney and Heather, a black/white friendship pair in their 20s who grew up together on the same street in Detroit. Their interaction and narratives seemed qualitatively different from those in this study. I would like to hear more from friends such as these. The latter possibility–friends who have always lived here–may hold unique logistical

difficulties (where to find friends in this mobile era who both have never left metro Detroit?).

Furthermore, would black women and white women from this group be likely to form friendships?

However, I am deeply curious to hear the stories and narratives of such friendships if they exist.

Would such friends, with their life-long immersion in the metro Detroit metanarrative, find ways

to talk back to the ghost?

   In addition to scholarly pursuits, a number of lay applications of aspects of this research

may be possible. Some version of Our Friendship Story might be conducive to healthy discussion

in workshops and retreats that invite participants to focus on their relational or parenting skills. At

times during the research process, I wished that some one would have guided this kind of

metadiscursive, narrative project for a friend and me. I am blessed with many friends for whom

this research might have offered insight, challenge, and enjoyment. (I actually did answer the

questions, keeping in mind a specific friend, in my field journal. The process, even when

undertaken as an individual, was enlightening.) A method modeled after Our Friendship Story,

then, may offer benefits to participants in workshops or retreats. The palimpsest, too, might be a

useful device in lay settings.   In workshops on racial healing or organizational conflict, for

instance, palimpsests could be collaboratively composed, expressing the history and perspectives

of various racial/ethnic groups or factions in conflict. Under skilled facilitation, those who need to

live in the presence of those collective narratives could attempt to respond to them. The responses

(or inability to respond) might guide a process of healing or conflict resolution.   Finally, the

interview transcripts themselves might provide the inspiration for a performance script that would

bring the voices of these three friendships to light for a wider audience who might benefit from their shared narratives.

Concluding Reflections

We Are

We are in a slim demographic:
a middle-aged doctoral candidate
with a dead husband
and a young son

where nuclear families are whole
or split
differently.

We are adjacent to Detroit
on a lush border,

Evangelicals
with Episcopalian tastes

Integrationists
where the welcome
is hard
on all sides.

We are in a slim demographic
finding a place in the middle
where danger balances
on every edge.
   –Marcia Van't Hof (5/23/11)

As the dissertation draws to a close, I reflect on my own researcher narrative. The journey has been long and grey from the beginning. It has always felt dangerous here on the border. But before my husband died, our demographic, at least, was not as slender. We had no extended family in the area, but at least we were an ordinary little family of three, with connections to a larger community through his profession. Our son was doing well in his friendships and schools: first preschool, then kindergarten, then first grade at a third school. My husband and I were

struggling in this social landscape, but the struggle was collaborative. This field note, from

5/26/06, will illustrate:

Life on Mack Ave.
        Yesterday Mark and I drove down Mack Ave to get to lunch at an Eastern Market restaurant. The day was bright and warm. Mark drove with his window down.
        As we began the drive, we talked about racial injustice in this area, specifically about the wall between GPP and Detroit (when/why it was built); the "red line" used for insurance rates (Where is it? Can you still see it? Elissa say's she's seen it.); and the wall featured in the *Free Press* recently. Built in another borderline area (someplace on the famous 8-Mile divider), it was used in the '50s to indicate that the black neighborhood stops here. Seems that a developer wanted a plat for middle-class whites, but the loans weren't going through because of the plat's proximity to black Detroit. The developer built a wall, assuring the feds that, yes, this really was a neighborhood for whites. The loan applications were henceforth accepted.
        The wall no longer separates whites from blacks (I would guess both sides are now predominantly black), but it still exists and is being transformed by the Blight Busters organization into an art installation.
        We were discussing these topics as nice, white middle-class liberals should, taking our side against segregation and prejudice.
        Meanwhile, we were driving deeper and deeper into urban Detroit. The streets look mean there, even in cheerful sunshine. Contents of homes piled up on the parkways. Boarded-up homes and businesses. Many businesses still open are pawn shops, liquor stores, second-hand shops, beat-up establishments with hand-lettered signs. Houses are abandoned; lots are vacant. People mill about in groups or walk alone with sauntering steps.
        Lots of traffic lights happen on Mack Ave., despite the fact that they don't seem needed any more. Side streets, especially, have little traffic. We had to keep stopping and looking. None of the people, that I recall, were white. When we were stopped at one of the traffic lights, one of the men sauntering alone took a good look at us. "Get the fuck back to the suburbs!" he called out.
        Mark took a sideways glance at me, and I winced to show I had heard.
        Being a nice, white, middle-class liberal driving down Mack Ave. isn't easy. I can see why most white people avoid it. We avoided it on the way home. Mark took Jefferson Ave. "Too many traffic lights on Mack," he said.

Mark's comment at the end of this narrative was oblique, but he was often able to name things

directly, insightfully. He said it was "maddening" to live in this area. "Maddening." Yes, living

here makes you *mad*–angry–and it makes you *mad*–crazy. The combination of rage and impotence

in a dysfunctional social landscape is toxic. Sometimes, I suppose, the color of metro Detroit is

flame red. But we were braving the colors together–as marriage partners, friends, intellectual

equals, collaborators in our professions, and parents of our son. When I complained to Mark on a

regular basis that I needed friends here–the confidence that I actually had friends was hard to come by although I was "trying hard"–he mostly just listened. The listening was a comfort.

Mark's death changed everything. The whole world was murky, dark grey and cold as the February snow. My son and I felt ourselves alone–actually, it's hard to know what my son felt–in a social world that seemed to have no place for us. Aimee Carrillo Rowe (2008) writes:

> Judith Butler (2004) explores the possibility for alliance that opens with the arrival of grief; that mourning the loss of someone brings us to fundamentally question not only who "you" are, but also who "I" might be: "On one level, I think I have lost 'you' only to discover that 'I' have gone missing as well" (p. 22). This questioning opens us to glimpse the tie that binds us, that space in between, the bond. In this sense, disorientation is productive. (p. 22)

Although I acknowledge Carrillo Rowe's and Butler's wisdom in this statement, I refuse to believe that this dissertation would have been inferior had I finished it in Mark's daily presence. Certainly it would have been finished sooner. Certainly it would have benefitted from the smart and often surprising observations he offered on a regular basis. Instead of sharing conversations with Mark about metro Detroit and segregation, however, I was now looking for yet another one of the few local integrated schools for my son to attend. We had found one the year before, but with Mark unable to share in the daily commute, I needed something closer. A maddening experience for our child.

Though already, before Mark's death, I had had quite enough of what Carrillo Rowe (2008) calls "productive disorientation" to bring to the dissertation (due to our recent stressful

relocation), I will admit that the trauma of what heretofore had been unthinkable disorientation brought me to a different place–not a better place, but a different one–as a researcher. After a time of thinking of the dissertation hardly at all, I returned to the research, but I left off working so hard; I stopped gazing around me so intensely for locations where interracial friends might meet. Instead, I waited to see if the friends would come to me. I let them come in their time and in their way. They arrived, and I took their participation in the dissertation research as a gift.

Celia and Kate offered the gift of being first. Celia pretty well insisted that she wanted to participate and then facilitated the arrival of her friend, despite the gaps that challenge them. The friends accepted me as a researcher rather than as a "charity case"; they were patient with the rust that probably showed in my researcher facade. They also offered me the gift of affirmation of a kind of friendship that I think I've always believed in: an "open friendship" across difference that theologian Jurgen Moltmann (1994) says Jesus emulated with his confidantes. "Open friendships" across socially co-constructed difference have always drawn me and nourished me; Celia and Kate embrace and practice their "open friendship" in an explicitly religious sense that resonates with me.

Erica and Jynil offered the gift of sunshine. At a time and place in my life that was exceedingly grey, they were unflinchingly yellow. And it never seemed like a show. Their energy and optimism shone through their compliments and affirmation of each other, their ready smiles, their quick conversational rate, and their narratives that consistently "found a way to good." Both of them face conflict in their work and family lives, but they make a practice of empathizing and problem-solving in their conversations. I was, at times, jealous of their joy and

their stable marriages and their professional success. I was, at times, worn out by the speed of their discourse. But, mostly, I basked in the sunshine of Erica and Jynil's signature color. It was yet another gift.

Jean and Candace came bearing the gift of intellectual stimulation. In a discursive world bereft of my long-time intellectual conversation partner, they knew how to speak the academic language. I was so entertained and engaged by their spirited intellectual discussions, many of them inflected by our shared serious interest in the social landscape of metro Detroit.

Jean and Candace offered another important gift, too. Burke's (1941/1973) concept of literature as "equipment for living" was embodied many times for me in the stories and narratives of the friends, but I will mention one instance in particular with Jean and Candace. The preface here is that creating and maintaining peaceable relationships is one of my deeply held values. I will strive for them with enormous energy. I am certain that this default–to use an unpoetic but apt analogy–is one reason why I chose this dissertation topic. Peaceable relationships are such a priority that I will avoid important, potentially healthy conflict in order to preserve a veneer of civility. As readers can imagine, the contentious camaraderie of Jean and Candace was both entertaining and unnerving for me. The challenges in their dialogue, two of which I have analyzed earlier, challenged my sense of how relationships should work and led me to fear for the future of these friends. But the "equipment for living" from Jean and Candace was this: Two people can be very close friends amidst frequent, even ongoing and unresolved conflict. The main thing is that they keep the dialogue open, even about the hardest things. Jean and Candace were remarkable in this sense; witnessing them in interaction was a true gift.

And get this: Despite their greatly elevated tolerance for conflict–they actually seemed to revel in it–these friends also offered the most amazing example of friendship convergence that I witnessed in any of the pairs. In the opening survey for the research, I asked each friend to write an answer to this question: "How would you define the kind of friendship you share with your friend?" The friends all sent separate email responses. Jean wrote as her first sentence to this question: "Candace is my closest friend and confidant." Candace wrote as her first sentence: "Jean is my closest friend and confidant." I was astonished to think that perhaps they had written the same sentence independently. Jean later confirmed that, yes, they had written the same thing without conferring with each other on the question or its answer (personal communication, June 5, 2011). She also said, "Wow." Yes–*wow*. Two friends who challenge each other in such disconcerting ways also are in complete agreement that they are closest friends and confidants. Witnessing such a friendship was an amazing gift.

All three pairs of friends, of course, offered me the generous gift of their time and some of their secrets. They allowed a "C" in what is usually "an A and B conversation" (Smitherman, 2006). They sought me more than I sought them, which is a gift I needed in the low ebb of grief. Their relational worlds were fascinating enough that they coaxed me away–at least temporarily–from my immersion in the grey world of the grieving household that my son and I shared. Their narratives were important enough, I realized, that maybe I could represent them even though this project had seemed impossible, unimportant without Mark. The friends helped to recall me to a former self–transformed somehow now, but still recognizable as an aspiring scholar.

One of them called me "brown sugar." One of them went crestfallen when she found out that my husband had died as hers had. One of them fumed about the dearth of integrated schools, and I heard myself talking. One of them asked about my son, and really listened. One of them called me friend. All of them said they liked the friendship research.

The world here is not so grey now. No, I haven't gone blind and deaf and numb to the struggles in this social world in my border location. However, defying smart antiracists like Jensen (2005), I am less angry about racial injustice–though I know there's still cause–and more open to listening to the stories on all sides. There is too much anger and sadness already in our little household, and anger is too much allied with the local word: *fight.* Instead, I try to listen–listen as Jean, especially, models and advocates. In a recent conversation between three African American moms (in which I was a marginal participant), the debate was heated: What was the best option?–an all-black school or a "mixed" school for their children? I listened. Later, I asked one of the moms–one that I knew fairly well–to tell me more. She did. I listened. I told her as we walked back to our cars that I felt an obligation to send my child to an integrated school because I wanted him to really *know* kids of different races rather than live in an isolated world of white privilege. She told me she thought most white people didn't want to talk about white privilege. I said it was part of my work. We are continuing in conversation.

The climate–meteorological and social–is still grey here, though sometimes a lighter grey, flecked with other colors. I now have not just friendships to write about, but friendships to enjoy. I asked my pastor husband to pray that I would find friends, and now they have arrived. Another field note, then, this one from 7/23/11:

A Grey Day

On a July morning in Detroit, I am thinking about grey. The dissertation is nearly finished, and I am thinking about grey. How "black and white do not make grey" was more a statement of faith when I chose it rather than a reflection of experience.

So many grey experiences as a borderland resident of metro Detroit.

This morning is another grey experience, I say to myself. I am distracting myself from the event of the moment by thinking my thoughts about the dissertation and grey.

At the moment, I am on a Gift of Life 5K walk on Belle Isle in Detroit. Yes, Belle Isle, host to views of Detroit that are gentle . . . views across the Detroit River. Also host to the sparks that ignited the 1943 race riot.

I am walking for Gift of Life. I would not have known about this organization, except that my husband lost his life, and we gave remnants of it away. He was an organ and tissue donor.

It is a grey day and I am thinking my own thoughts. My son chose not to walk with me, but to run with a friend, now a Detroiter, though my husband and I first knew him when we lived in Kalamazoo several years ago.

The friend who is running with my son is helping him move at his pace.

Mine is too slow now. I am thinking grey.

It's not hard. The sky is grey. The misty, hot air is grey. The asphalt is grey. The Detroit River is grey. The two sweaty T-shirts of the walkers ahead of me are grey. The wing feathers on the Mallard ducks and seagulls are grey. The weedy, murky water of the reflecting pool is grey. Belle Isle could be a spectacular city park. People say it was. Now it is cracked, blighted, broken in so many places. The aquarium, zoo, and golf course–all closed now.

I try to think of other things, as I so often do, even though I'm supposed to be thinking grey because of the dissertation.

I think about how I am keeping up a good pace. A fitting tribute to my husband. He walked briskly everywhere. He loved long distances. How could he leave me alone like this after such a short distance in this grey place on the border of Detroit and Grosse Pointe Park? How could he have died of cardiac arrest ? . . . so that here I am, walking alone on this grey day.

Dark grey thoughts.

I wish that I had some one to talk to, at least. When I did this walk last year, I found a couple of conversation partners. I throw a few glances over at the woman walking to my right. She never responds with a glance.

All at once, I am walking beside some one. I don't know why, but I say, "Why did the Lord give us such humidity today?" It's the kind of thing Detroiters say.

If she doesn't want to talk about "the Lord," that's fine. I have little to lose on a grey day.

But we do talk about the weather . . . and the 50 T-shirts that went missing for her group that morning . . . and why she doesn't run any more . . . and that my son is running with a friend . . . and about where her church is and who her pastor is . . . and about where I attend church in Detroit and who the pastor is there.

I glance at her a few times, and I admit that a guess at her age range is just as interesting to me as the color of her skin. Mostly I see smile lines.

I am not thinking so much about grey.

We have only a short distance to go. I tell her I am planning to run at the end to impress my waiting son. She says she wants to run at the end, too.

The finish line comes within sight, and we both take off. I see my son and his friend sitting on the grass, waiting, smiling.

The woman who has walked and run with me is not a friend, but like a friend. The conversation and silence and pace were companionable. We throw arms around one another for an instant, tell each other our names, and she is off to find her team–the team without the T-shirts.

I find my son and his friend.

In the grey walk and at its finish, sometimes one friend is enough.

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Appendix A:

CROSS-RACE FRIENDSHIPS BETWEEN WOMEN:
SUMMARY OF SURVEY PREFERENCES

Questions:

As you answer the questions below, <u>please keep one or more of your cross-race friendships in mind</u>. Explain your answers in any way you'd like.

1. Which of these methods (A, B, C, D, E, F, G or more than one) do you think would help you most in telling the story of this friendship?

Collated Preferences:

A–Survey:	11 respondents
B–Journal Entry:	8
C–Friends Interviewed Separately:	11
D–Friends Interviewed Together:	12
E–Focus Group:	6
F–Photo Share:	0
G–Visual Representation:	1

Note:
"Denise" and "Tiff" did not offer letter preferences. Instead Denise comments, "I think a combination of several would best cover the multiple aspects of the friendship. One alone may simply not be adequate to fully appreciate the experience of the friendship."

Tiff writes, "All of the above methods would be acceptable. For me the method would depend on how much time I had available to devote to the survey."

2. a. Which of these methods (A, B, C, D, E, F, G or more than one) is most within your comfort level?

Collated Preferences:

a.	A–Survey:	12 respondents
	B–Journal Entry:	3
	C–Friends Interviewed Separately:	6
	D–Friends Interviewed Together:	14
	E–Focus Group:	4
	F–Photo Share:	1
	G–Visual Representation:	3

Note:
"Susan" comments with her choices that "[a]ll would be fine comfort-wise and none would be out of my comfort zone; however, when it comes to my lazy zone . . . I'd prefer A, C, D, or E." "Eunice" also comments that all methods are within her comfort level, but most comfortable would be "G."

b. Which is least within your comfort level?

Collated Preferences:
b.	A–Survey:	3 respondents
	B–Journal Entry:	6
	C–Friends Interviewed Separately:	0
	D–Friends Interviewed Together:	3
	E–Focus Group:	3
	F–Photo Share:	5
	G–Visual Representation:	9

Note:
"Denabah" did not offer any letter choices. She states, "Any of the ways would work for me. My friend and I have been in each others' lives for almost 16 years, we've walked through life together."

3. Any other comments about these methods?

Responses:
Cheryl: A survey may give more candid feedback or less censored I should say. People tend to be more open and honest when they are not being quoted or asked questions in front of a group of people. For me I am open talking about my cross-race friendship in anyway.

Denebah: The methods are valid.

The only thing that I would like to add is that I have a problem with the phrase: cross-race. It is my belief that there is only one race, the human race. Man-kind is simply made up of various ethnic groups, but one race. All people are a variant of the shade of brown, some of a lighter hue and some of a darker hue, but all one race.

Marie: They are all interesting – depends on what data you want to collect to tell which one would be most helpful.

My strongest reaction was that if it is about friendship then at least part of the time should be with the friends together.

My closest friends are from high school and I went to an all-white high school. My cross-race friendships are a result of our children and our choice to live, work and worship in diverse settings.

Faith: I see the survey (A) as offering the "least yield of true feelings, candid responses." The picture method (G) is "interesting but cumbersome."

Denise: These methods are all great ways to gain this information. However the interview, journal entries and photo/visual presentations are far more personal and telling of the truth of the dynamics in the relationships. I applaud you for your interest in this topic. It is much needed, beyond written word. I hope you will not only follow through with this project, but present your findings as often and in as many culturally different arenas as possible!

Genevieve: Methods are fine—I also have other contacts with people who have more in-depth cross-cultural friendships/marriages if you need them. Also Marsha, it would be almost easier to talk about cross-race relationships over a cup of coffee with you and anyone else—

Marilyn: I don't know how useful my comments will be because this is not a current friendship.

Susan: General comments on my take on several of the methods: I'm unsure of your end goal...if you're looking for a deep or a wide study; some seem to lend themselves to some facts from lots of people while others seem like they'd generate lots of stories and insights from fewer people;

Method A: very factual; not much depth

Method B: relies on people's self motivation; less people will respond and even less with any kind of depth; and my guess is that you will get most of your information from people with similar personality types;

Method E: lots of fun and energy; but potential for the energy to go bad!; some people will be more guarded because they're talking about volatile issues with strangers; great potential for folks to get offended and snippy; my other concern about this method is you won't be able to cover as much ground or won't get as deep because of the number of people who will need a turn to speak; probably would work if you only needed one or two questions answered;

Method F & G: doesn't seem like this would tell you much about the cross cultural aspect of the relationship; also seems like you have the potential of getting a lot of nothing...not much depth and not much detail; also, similar to B, I'd guess that certain personality types would do dominate in who you get the most usable information from; if anything, seems more like an icebreaker for B, C, D, or E;

Kate: I dislike writing about things that deal with affective concepts. I lack confidence in my writing skills to assume that I could succinctly and definitively express my thoughts and feelings.

I chose an interview with both women present because it affords the interviewer a multitude of answers to unasked questions by observing the body language and the interaction of the two women. An interviewer would see a lot of these nuances with [my friend] and me.

Eileen: Try to bring out cultural differences but be sensitive to cross "cultural" friendships.

Casey: Hi Marcia, I am very comfortable with my friends regardless of the color of their skin. I wonder how many women would feel comfortable bringing their friend to an all African American party, all Indian or an all White party. How would that make them fee being the one who is different? Perhaps how many other friends do they have that are different from themselves? How much do you try to learn about your friend's culture? Do you try new foods or clothing? Do you ask each other what bothers them the most about the other ethnic group? Do you ask your friend about different things that they do that you don't understand? These are just a couple of thoughts. Good luck!

Sarah: I don't like metaphors; I want to be concrete in this situation

Donna: I am familiar with these methods.

Optional: How do you identify yourself in terms of ethnicity and/or race?

Responses:
Joan: Caucasian, white
Diane: white
Cheryl: Caucasian
Denebah: American of African descent
Marie: Human!:-)
Brenda: Caucasian
Denise: white
Tiff: African American
Nancy: Caucasian
Marilyn: white
Patricia: African American
Dorrie: caucasian
Kate: European and Caucasian
Rosemary: Black
Eileen: white
Casey: white

Delia: caucasian
Sarah: Spanish Messianic Jew
Eunice: White ethnicity, and hopefully, human race. (sometimes, on a bad hair day, I wonder)
Donna: African American
Tracy: White/Caucasian
Collation:
14 Respondents: Caucasian, white, European
5 Respondents: African American, Black, American of African descent*
3 Respondents: did not offer an answer to this question
1 Respondent: human race
1 Respondent: Spanish Messianic Jew**

*I was dismayed to find that my goal of an approximate 50/50% ratio of black to white was not met in this survey. As women began to respond to the survey, I noticed this pattern among respondents and made several attempts to contact additional African American potential participants. Obviously, my efforts were did not produce the balance I desired. Largely (and sadly), I attribute the racial imbalance in survey results to my own lack of African American acquaintances. Although many people in my social and professional networks are people of color, most are white. This deficit in the survey research motivated me to become even more determined to seek the collaboration of at least one African American woman scholar as I analyzed the survey data.

**Although this respondent's friendship does not match the confines of the upcoming dissertation study (which will be about cross-race friendships between black and white women), she and her friend (who also participated in the survey) clearly identify themselves as cross-race friends (as a white woman and a woman of color who have forged a friendship over a number of years). They both wanted to participate in the survey. Since I deemed that their responses would be relevant to a short survey about cross-race friendships between women, I included them.

Appendix B: Invitational Flyer

(Note: The image in the original was larger–for visual impact. Likewise, the texts of all appendices below have been condensed in the interest of conserving space.)

"Friends are the family we choose for ourselves." –Edna Buchanan

Introducing a new communication research study . . .

"Black and White Do Not Make Grey:
Stories of Cross-Race Friendships Between Women in Metro Detroit"

Goals of the friendship research:
      to understand how women friends use communication to build their relationships.
      to learn from the friends how their stories may be unique because of the way their relationships bridge a racial divide in metro Detroit.
      to honor the friendships of women by letting their stories be told.

You may qualify for this communication research study if you and a close friend . . .
      have considered yourselves friends for <u>at least two years</u>.
      have lived anywhere in metro Detroit for <u>at least ten years</u>.
      connect in <u>more than one setting</u> (for example, workplace friends who also see each other occasionally on weekends).
      have an ongoing relationship in an interracial, black/white friendship.
      are <u>both</u> willing to meet with a communication researcher to talk about your friendship.

What's involved in the research process?
<u>First</u>, possible participants will take a brief introductory survey to determine their eligibility for the friendship research.

Once accepted into the research study, each pair of friends will participate in <u>three steps</u>:
      1. a discussion between the two friends about their relationship (using questions provided by the researcher, who will not be present),

2. a discussion with both friends and the communication researcher (in interview format), and

3. a follow-through interview/discussion (with the friends and researcher) in order to bring closure to the study.

Total time to participate in this university-based study: about 6 hours

Interested?
Please contact the communication researcher, Marcia Van't Hof. She is living in metro Detroit while she completes her doctoral dissertation from the University of Colorado, Boulder. She will answer all questions and provide a brief preliminary survey for all interested friends.
Marcia Van't Hof
313-882-5635, mvanthof@sbcglobal.net or marcia.vanthof@colorado.edu

Note: This communication research study has been approved by the Human Research Committee at the University of Colorado, Boulder. Privacy and confidentiality of research participants will be respected, and detailed Consent Forms will be provided and signed before participation in this study begins.

Cover art: *Friends* by Hugo Palma
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Appendix C: Preliminary Demographic Questionnaire

Women's Friendships: A Preliminary Questionnaire
Name: _____

1. <u>About you</u>:

Race/ethnicity: _____   Age: _____

Occupation: _____

Previous occupation(s), if any: _____

Approximate number of years of friendship with _____:_____
<div align="center">(name of friend)   (number of years)</div>

Approximate number of years of residence in metro Detroit: _____

2. Settings in which you connect with your friend (for example, your workplace, in each other's homes, place where you work out, etc.): _____
<div align="center">(Please list two or more.)</div>

3. How would you define the kind of friendship you share with your friend?

4. Contact Information
Address: _____
Phone(s): _____
Email (if available): _____
Best way to reach you (phone or email): _____
Best time(s) to reach you (if I need to call): _____

Thanks for responding to this questionnaire! I'll be contacting you soon about possible participation in the friendship study.

Appendix D: The Friends' Definitions of Friendship

Questionnaire asks:
How would you define the kind of friendship you share with your friend?

Celia: "Comfortable, close even though we don't see each other as much as we'd like to."
Kate: "Ours is a lifelong friendship of common faith and common morals. We love and are committed to our families and being the women that God has called us to be. We both value the contributions were are able to make to the world and creating and leaving a better world for our children to live in. We can be out of contact for an extended period of time and still pick up right where we left off, no guilt, no gaps, no missed step. We rarely get together nowadays without our families, and our husbands and children have forged their own relationships. We are the godparents of each other's children. We have traveled together and have taken care of each other's children. We have an open door friendship."

Erica: "We have a supportive friendship where we can be open and honest without any judgement."
Jynil: "Erica is the kind of friend that I connect with on a very personal level. I can tell her anything, and she is always there to listen. We help each other out emotionally when we need it and always make sure to stay in touch, if only by phone when schedules are crazy. We care about each other deeply, and I feel that our friendship will last for a very long time. We are both similar in age, and we relate to each other very well, I think, because we are in similar places in our lives (raising families, dealing with spouses, going to college, climbing career ladders, etc).

Jean: "Candace is my closest friend and confidant. The foundation of our friendship is mutual respect and an enjoyment of intellectual stimulation."
Candace: "Jean is my closest friend and confidant. She has been there for me through various personal challenges (and still is). We support each other, both personally and in our work, as she works on her PhD and I deal with the challenges of teaching. I've never had such a close, open and honest relationship with another woman."

Appedix E: "Our Friendship Story" Project

Our Friendship Story

Important: Please read these instructions and the questions below at least a couple of days before you are scheduled to get together with your friend. I make this request because I want this process to be as comfortable and enjoyable as possible for both of you.

   I'll contact you just before you get together to complete this project in order to see if you have any questions about the process (of course you're welcome to contact me, too).

Instructions:
- Imagine that the two of you are co-authoring a book about your friendship. I intend that the following questions will help you decide together what your book will be like.
- Your answers to the questions may be short or long–your preference. If the two of you disagree, you're welcome to compromise or write down two individual answers.
- Please write the same responses on the two copies I've provided. Because both of you will write answers to the questions, we will have a "back-up" copy (which you are welcome to keep).
- If you'd like to add thoughts about topics that I haven't included, please do. Also feel free to leave questions blank for any reason.

Important Note:
Although you know that you are participating in this study as friends who share an interracial friendship, I understand that racial identity may or may not make much difference in the way you tell the story of your friendship. I'm not looking for "right" answers or confirmation of communication theories. First and foremost, I am interested learning about *your own sense of who you are as friends*.

Thanks for sharing the story of your friendship with me.

Marcia

Friendship Story Questions:

1. Imagine the story of your friendship as a book. Please begin by dividing this book into chapters, labeling each chapter with a title.

2. What might be the title of the entire book? (If this question is difficult at first, you might want to save it for later.)

3. What would be a "key scene" in each of the categories below?
- A "key scene" is any memory of an incident that has become significant to your friendship for any reason.
- A key scene may come from any of the chapters.
- It's possible that the same scene is the best choice for more than one of the categories below.
- Please jot down your "key scenes" with a short description.

A. A significant early experience in your friendship:
B. A significant recent experience:
C. A high point:
D. A low point:
E. A turning point:

F. One other significant experience:

4. As friends, what do you do best? (This could occur in any or all of your chapters.)

5. How would this book describe the greatest challenge to your friendship? (Again, this challenge might arise in any or all of your chapters.)

6. Who would be the heroes and villains of this book? (In other words, who would be the positive and negative characters in your friendship story? Please offer an example or two of each without giving the real names of the heroes or villains.)

7. "Setting," of course, relates to the place(s) where stories happen. Which setting(s) seem most important to your friendship story, and why?

8. What beliefs and values would be evident to a reader of this story? (In other words, what could a reader tell about the things that are important to you as friends?)

9. In a sentence or two: What would be a theme (or "moral of the story") for the book of your friendship?

10. Imagine the next chapter or more of your friendship story. What do you think or hope future chapters might include?

The "Authors" Sign Off:
Friendship study participants: _____
Where we met: _____
Date: _____
Length of meeting: _____
Now that you're finished:

- ASAP, please take one of the two copies you've made and mail it to me in the addressed, stamped envelope I've provided. (You're welcome to keep the second copy as a souvenir of this experience.:-)
- Please decide on a few options for time and place that will work for both of you to do the upcoming three-person interview with me.
- Let me know (phone call or email) that you've completed this discussion about the story of your friendship. Then we can set up the three-person interview. I look forward to meeting with you and learning more about the story of your friendship.   I'll be interested to hear more about the responses you've written down during your discussion.

Thanks very much for your participation in this friendship study!

Appendix F: Responses to Our Friendship Story

Appendix _____: Responses to Our Friendship Story

Note: Instructions for this guided discussion were omitted for the purposes of this appendix.

Friendship Story Questions:

1. Imagine the story of your friendship as a book. Please begin by dividing this book into chapters, labeling each chapter with a title.
    Celia & Kate: **"Aargh!"**
    Erica & Jynil: **"Chapter 1–The Girl Scout Years;**
            Chapter 2–Moms Together! Our Families;
            Chapter 3–What do you do when you don't work together any more?;
            Chapter 4–Balancing personal & professional demands;
            Chapter 5–We are on our way! What does the Future hold?"
    Jean & Candace: **"Chapter 1–The Encounter: 'Hi, I'm Candace';**
            Chapter 2–Life After Death;
            Chapter 3–Le Car;
            Chapter 4–Where will we live;
            Chapter 5–Shall we dance?–realizing we might like to engage in a
               relationship;
            Chapter 6–UPS Rings Twice;
            Chapter 7–The Master's Dance;
            Chapter 8–Goodbye, Mom;
            Chapter 9–Separate, but Joined"

2. What might be the title of the entire book? (If this question is difficult at first, you might want to save it for later.)
    Celia & Kate: "Coming Apart, Getting Together!"
    Erica & Jynil: "Friends Until the End"
    Jean & Candace: "The Zebra Experience"

3. What would be a "key scene" in each of the categories below?
Note:
   –A "key scene" is any memory of an incident that has become significant to your friendship for any reason.
   –A key scene may come from any of the chapters.
   –It's possible that the same scene is the best choice for more than one of the categories below.
   –Please jot down your "key scenes" with a short description.

A. A significant early experience in your friendship:
    Celia & Kate: "Going to Jamaica together in 1995"

   Erica & Jynil: "Erica's pregnancy with 2nd child; Jynil's adoption of child, school, leg; becoming moms together"

   Jean & Candace: "The death of Candace's husband in 2003 served to enhance the intimacy of our relationship. An example of this is when Candace picked up Jean at the airport soon after [Candace's husband's] death. We shared a meal and conversation. Jean had no one to rely on for this sort of thing & Candace needed to "do" something for someone."

B. A significant recent experience:
   Celia & Kate: "New levels of faith journey"
   Erica & Jynil: "Transition to Executive Director and career move to Detroit. Erica supporting husband through pharmacy school"
   Jean & Candace: "This lunch–12/21/09"

C. A high point:
   Celia & Kate: "All the times when we come together and reconnect!"
   Erica & Jynil: "Going through the process of Catholic confirmation and being together through that"
   Jean & Candace: "Baking Christmas Cookies"

D. A low point:
   Celia & Kate: "Being physically apart due to 'life' getting in the way"
   Erica & Jynil: "When we weren't working at the same work place"
   Jean & Candace: "Trying to get Le Car repaired & my treating Jean like a child–'white man's burden'"

E. A turning point:
   Celia & Kate: "?"
   Erica & Jynil: "When Erica left [our shared work place]. Our relationship lost the co-worker dynamic, but our Friendship Flourished."
   Jean & Candace: "Le Car"

F. One other significant experience:
   Celia & Kate: "Deciding to make John and Celia _____[Kate's daughter's] godparents
   Erica & Jynil: "Both coming to be employed in the same service area (Detroit) so we can grow professionally. Still growing together."
   Jean & Candace: "Ladies Who Brunch"

4. As friends, what do you do best? (This could occur in any or all of your chapters.)
   Celia & Kate: "hang out, talking & eating"
   Erica & Jynil: "We have similar goals & values (parenting, career, marriage) & support each other. Career women have to 'check their power' at the door. There is safety in honesty."
   Jean & Candace: "We listen deeply to one another & critique & offer observations/input without fear of judgement or repercussions."

5. How would this book describe the greatest challenge to your friendship? (Again, this challenge might arise in any or all of your chapters.)
   Celia & Kate: "That life has come up and paths have changed but our faith has been steadfast and our friendship has been strengthened."

Erica & Jynil: "Time constraints do not allow us to spend more 'down time' together without stress. Distance is an issue."

Jean & Candace: "Describes the challenges of developing & maintaining a relationship between 2 people from different socio-cultural backgrounds. Further,"

6. Who would be the heroes and villains of this book? (In other words, who would be the positive and negative characters in your friendship story? Please offer an example or two of each without giving the real names of the heroes or villains.)

  Celia & Kate: "Heroes: God, the Trinity! Immediate family."
       "Villains: Time & Life"
  Erica & Jynil: "Heroes: husbands, our children"
       "Villains: 1. colleague(s) 2. N/A"
  Jean & Candace: "At any given time, we have both been hero/villain within the context of this relationship. For example the Le Car chapter, Candace was the villain. The influence of others simply changes the dynamic."

7. "Setting," of course, relates to the place(s) where stories happen. Which setting(s) seem most important to your friendship story, and why?

  Celia & Kate: "Church, where we draw our strength. Initially the setting was work as it was where we met and where [we] draw our sense of woman-hood. 'Home'–this is the heart of our family."
  Erica & Jynil: "Juan Miguel's restaurant–This is our 'special place.' BD's Mongolian BBQ. We bond over Food!"
  Jean & Candace: "No physical setting, but the educational atmosphere like we experienced on campus & which continues as we continue our involvement with education."

8. What beliefs and values would be evident to a reader of this story? (In other words, what could a reader tell about the things that are important to you as friends?)

  Celia & Kate: "The importance of Jesus Christ in our lives and family"
  Erica & Jynil: "1. Family obligations, 2. Career 3. We share a desire to improve our community"
  Jean & Candace: Jean and Candace left the last three questions blank. Candace wrote this note to explain: "Jean and I apologize for the delay in getting this to you. We have both been crazy busy. Here's what we have so far. We can flesh it out when the 3 of us get together, okay?"

9. In a sentence or two: What would be a theme (or "moral of the story") for the book of your friendship?

  Celia & Kate: "With Jesus All Things are Possible."
  Erica & Jynil: "'Friendship' gardens are cultivated and are well worth the hard work."
  Jean & Candace: blank

10. Imagine the next chapter or more of your friendship story. What do you think or hope future chapters might include?

  Celia & Kate: "Travel, Ministry,Grandchildren"
  Erica & Jynil: "We will continue to support each other as our children grow & partner in our career paths. As our children grow, we can enjoy & afford more time together. Our Friendship will never get stale & will continue to evolve."
  Jean & Candace: blank

Appendix G: Three-Person Interview Protocol

As we talk today, I'd like to hear from both of you. You can share the "air time" as you wish. I'm not offended whether you decide to agree or disagree with each other or with me! I just want to learn more about your story and how the two of you view things. But of course it's OK if you talk with each other as well as with me. We might not have much of it, but silence is OK, too!

Debriefing about "Our Friendship Story":
1. When you think back to the get-together when the two of you wrote down answers to the "Friendship Book" questions, what was that discussion like for you?
> In what ways was it easy? . . . hard? . . . What was the easiest/hardest question?
> What was most fun? . . . least fun?
> What, if anything, did you learn from this process?

2. When you met together this time, did you find that you usually agreed with your friend about how to answer the questions . . . or disagreed?
> Where or how did you need to compromise on your answers? . . . Could you provide an example?

Elaboration/Extension of "Our Friendship Story": *During this part of the interview, I will ask enough of the questions below to elicit at least one detailed narrative co-constructed by the friends. As time permits, additional detailed narratives or partial narratives may emerge. If participants do not "warm up" right away to their own stories, I ask follow-up questions to prompt (but not prod) additional detail.*
1. I found myself especially interested in the key scene that you saw as your [name a question, 3A-F from the "Friendship Story" responses]. I'd like to hear more about that key scene. Could the two of you please tell me that one in person? [This question may be repeated for other events.]

2. I'd like to ask about [some one you described as a hero or villain]. Could you please tell me about a particular event that would illustrate your point? (Of course if this story makes it into print, we will not use the name of the person involved.)

3. You wrote down that _____ is one of the things that you do best as friends. Could you please remember for me a specific time when you [did this action] together?

4. You wrote down that _____ is the greatest challenge to your friendship. Could you please tell me about a time when you had to deal head-on with that challenge?

Checking Interpretations:
1. I'd like to talk about the beliefs and values that seem to be important to your friendship story. Besides the values of _____ that you mention, I also see the value(s) of _____ in your friendship. What do you think about my idea?

2. You wrote that the theme of your story is _____.
> Why did it seem like that would be an appropriate theme?
> *(Optional)* I think that another theme of your friendship might be: _____

What do you think of my idea?

3. Reading between the lines of what you've said in your friendship story . . .
        I think that race matters for the two of you [in a certain way].
        [OR] race matters very little in your friendship.
        What do you think of this idea?

Metro Detroit:
One of the questions you answered relates to *setting*, the place where a story takes place. I notice that you did/didn't mention Detroit as the "big picture" setting for the story of your friendship.

1. How much do you think that your friendship story is affected by metro Detroit as a setting (in terms of race or in terms of anything else that comes to mind)?

2. How might your friendship be different if you lived somewhere else?

And Finally:
1. The title that you gave your story is _____.
        Why did you choose this title?
        As you think of it now, is it still an appropriate title?

2. Anything you'd like to ask me?

Thanks for your time and for sharing the story of your friendship with me.

I'll contact you soon about the follow-through interview, which we should schedule within the next month.

Appendix H: Follow-through Interview/Discussion

1. *I realize that some of my own interpretations of aspects of your friendship may differ from your own. Eventually, I'll need to give support for and stand by my own interpretations, whether or not they are exactly like yours. I am completely "for you" as friends . . . but I need to think for myself, even as I try to represent you well.*
And so . . . I am interpreting [a certain story] of your friendship to mean . . . ? What do you think of this interpretation?
[This member-checking question may be repeated to ask about more than one story. I will ask it especially when my outsider interpretations of the friendship seem to diverge from insider interpretations.]

2. (optional question) [A certain story] is one I may wish to include in one or more future publications. I am thinking that I will modify it [in certain ways] to protect your privacy. What do you think?

3. Of course the idea of "telling stories" has been important to this process, but I realize that not everything about a friendship is in story form. Is there anything important that either of you would like to say about your friendship that hasn't been said yet–maybe just because you didn't think of it earlier?

4. How has this research process affected your friendship?

5. I hear from you that race has/hasn't played a significant role in who you are as friends. In any case, you've probably heard that Detroit has been called the most racially segregated city in the country (so your friendship is probably rather unusual in this area).
--Why do you think people stay apart so much?
--How might metro Detroit be different if there were more friendships like yours around here?

6. What advice do you have for some one who is inexperienced with cross-race friendship but serious about nurturing a friendship with some one of a different race?

7. I just have to come out with this: I realize that during this interview process my identity as a white person may have affected what you chose to say or how you chose to say it. How do you think our conversations might have been different for you if I had been a black woman?

8. Any final comments or questions for me?

If you're thinking about this discussion later–or maybe talking about it with each other–and you have another thought you'd like to share about any of these questions, please connect with me again!
I wish you the very best for the future chapters of your friendship story.

Appendix I: Notes on the Transcripts

       I adapted the conventions of interview transcripts based on the research commitments of this study (especially that the discourse of the friends would be represented as fully and as faithfully as possible), attention to its primary data (co-constructed narrative in interaction), and the probable audience for this work, which I envisioned as including an interdisciplinary cohort of scholars as well as lay readers. The commitments, primary data, and readership of this study by necessity led to a balancing act with transcription: I wanted to honor both the scholarly interests of discourse specialists as well as the interests of readers who are not specialists in discourse analysis. With Linde (1993), I was concerned that "readers confronted with extensive unfamiliar transcription conventions" would tend to skip or only skim the transcript excerpts, "which is the worst possible outcome of a choice of transcription system" (p. vi). Thus I chose a middle ground in the gradient of detail and in adherence to scholarly conventions of transcription. In addition to the notes already offered in-text, I hope that these additional explanations will be helpful.

[ ] Brackets have been used in a variety of ways:

1. To indicate overlapping or simultaneous speech within a speaker's turn of talk.

2. To indicate that a speaker's turn of talk was interrupted. E.g.,
Candace: I couldn't tell [
Jean: [whether or not I was serious?
As in the case above, sometimes speakers finished one another's sentences, while in other cases they began new grammatical units.

3. To indicate a nonverbal element such as laughter within a speaker's turn of talk. In these cases, the nonverbal element is printed in italics (e.g, [*laughing*]).

4. To indicate volume or tone of voice that was decidedly different from the usual vocal performance of the speaker. Again, italics are used (e.g., [*very softly*]).

5. To indicate my interpretations surrounding an utterance. Again, italics are used (e.g., [*with a nonverbal sound indicating discomfort*]).

. . . Ellipses indicate short omissions from the transcript that I deemed would distract from the import of the utterance.

Additional note: During the transcription process, very occasionally a word or two proved to be unintelligible even after multiple listenings at various playback speeds. I indicated these words in the original transcripts with the notation [unintelligible]. For the sake of a "cleaner" transcript for readers of this document, I completely omitted these intelligible words, finding that they did not appear to alter the speaker's meaning.

       If readers have questions about the original transcripts or their representation in this document, please direct such questions to me as author.