

The Ethos of Citation in Qualitative Research Methodology

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Abstract

Framed through Kenneth Burke's famous parlor metaphor, this article considers how decisions related to citation are foundational to scholarly communication, with particular emphasis on qualitative research logics. Each citation decision implicates academicians in complex rhetorical and ethical situations that have material impact on other scholars, students receiving curriculum, and even existential notions related to the very survival of ideas. Believing that the texts we produce matter—both as objects of care and material constructions in themselves—this inquiry walks through theoretical and practical considerations for citation. Additionally, this article incorporates writing activities, and three writing artifacts from contributors, into the text to explore simple ways to play with citation in the classroom and research.

Keywords: citation, qualitative methodology, collaboration, pedagogy, writing.

The Ethos of Citation in Qualitative Research Methods

In his famous parlor metaphor, the rhetorician Kenneth Burke describes an unending conversation that begins before we are born and continues after we die. He asks us to imagine entering a parlor, where many people are talking: "You arrive late. When you arrive, others have proceeded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about" (1941, p. 110). This image has been taken up as a metaphor for academia, where we enter in the middle of things, trying to pick up on what's being said so that we might eventually offer our own ideas on the matter. At some point, "the hour grows late. And

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you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress” (p. 111).

Burke’s concept can be put to work illustrating academia as a collective knowledge-making unit that relies on listening to conversions (by reading and research) first, then speaking ideas on the matter (by writing and presenting). The natality present in Burke’s image—the conversations beginning before we are born in the world and carrying on after we leave—also integrates the existential and anxious elements of writing and circulating scholarship. Our time in academia, as part of our human existence, is temporal, but the texts we circulate hopefully transcend such limitations, reminding us that our corporeal presence in the parlor is of little consequence to the momentum of the conversations. Ideas can outlive people, and words spoken sometimes linger through the mouths of others, immortalized in text through citation and repetition. This metaphor aptly captures the surprising theme of death and the afterlife—an eschatological quality—found in reading and writing, often evident in formal texts and informal conversations among academicians.

The parlor, and its conversations, offers a collaborative epistemology of academia that complexifies the commonplace notion that two minds are better than one. Rather, ideas survive and rely upon repetition by many, making the origin of most ideas muddy in the first place. Epistemologically, we move “from viewing knowledge and reality as things exterior to or outside of us, as immediately accessible, individually knowable, measurable, and sharable—to viewing knowledge and reality as mediated by or constructed through language in social use, as socially constructed, contextualized, as, in short, the product of collaboration” (Lunsford, 1991, p. 4). Despite the fact that solo authorship and concepts of individual originality seem to be the foundations for much of academia’s requirements and general character, it is an institution that relies on relationships. In a Western-capitalist context at least, it is difficult to discard the “ideal citizen under neoliberalism,” who is “autonomous, entrepreneurial, and endlessly resilient, a self-sufficient figure” (The Care Collective, 2020, p. 12), and instead admit interdependencies (p. 5). But as Burke’s metaphor shows, all research is inherently collaborative in that it mingles the work from different times, people, and places into a new form. This represents an important dialectic of relationships in academia.

Thinking of scholarly communication within this framework further acknowledges not only the fruitful collectivity of all of our work, but also the way in which collaboration can act as a gate keeping mechanism. Only some are welcomed into the parlor, few get to speak, and still fewer will be repeated. While many things can inhibit or enable a scholar’s capacity to rise in academia—like economics, geography, gender, and more—anyone able to write and circulate research in academia is responsible for choosing which texts get repeated in their own work when they decide which texts to cite. In part, a scholar’s success relies on this kind of repetition from others, indicating that a lack of repetition is a kind of death sentence, at least to that idea. Similar to the problematic boot-straps mythology of capitalism, individuals do not rise to success merely through their singular genius in academia. We all rely on the aid of others, which sometimes never arrives.

Citation is thus fraught with ethical decisions about the survival of ideas, and also, a major way to

engage in the dialectic of relationships that are both explicit and implicit within our own work. Students have often brought the latter to my attention, beginning ten years ago when I taught college composition classes as a graduate assistant in English. Inspired by several students who told me that they would rather write about Nicki Minaj than the Walker Percy essay I assigned, I created a writing assignment for them that invited citations of both Minaj and Percy, in order to experiment with citational authority. Their feedback helped me see that some things I had identified as writing problems in the classroom were actually tensions regarding reading and citation, not writing itself. Over time, I made other writing activities, like one for graduate students in my class who gushed over the writing of living authors. They wished to express their admiration through citation, but they were not yet in the publishing stages of their careers. *Why don't you just write them fan mail instead?* I prompted. And they did; and many report that they carried on this habit after the class ended. Other activities considered the presentation of citations, and others investigated the disciplinary or cultural differences in citation, a fascinating topic to have in interdisciplinary or multinational courses.

In addition to investigating the nature of citation through theoretical means throughout this article, I also present some of these writing activities in the final section. To engage more deeply in the dialectic of relationships, I invited three graduate students who are thoughtful about their qualitative research practices to participate in a writing activity of their choice. One author, Matthew Harris, found that while the activities did welcome him to use different kinds of sources, he still struggled to present them with the authority inherent in traditional theoretical citation. These activities don't always make writing easier, another author, Jennifer Tesler, reflected. They merely initiate a different series of questions about what makes *good academic writing*, aiding us in reflecting on academic norms and citational authority.

The purpose of this inquiry, as a whole, is to reflect on aspects of theoretical citation in ways that are relevant to the qualitative research community engaged in discussions about methodological ethics, and pedagogical efforts with burgeoning researchers/students. Citation is an integral part of qualitative research methods, beginning with decisions about what to read and which of those readings will later make it into our writing. These decisions create the very conditions for inquiry in the first place, and they tend to take up enormous amounts of time during the research process. Citation seems to be an aspect of methodology that is inconspicuously protected from interrogation—critical discussions of citation are rarely part of any qualitative educational curriculum. In fact, a great deal of work that considers itself critical also includes entirely canonical citations, proving the point that citation is so invisible that it is rarely seen as an opportunity for difference or disruption. Starting today, any qualitative researcher could change their citation habits.

Thus, while citational politics has been considered by many whom I cite, I frame my argument somewhat differently by directing it at methodologists and framing it through ideas in Burke's metaphor—the unending conversation among scholars, and the survival of texts and ideas. I put Burke's concept and a few others from the rhetorical canon in fellowship with newer texts important within qualitative research and academe at large, creating a niche within this adding a

niche to this unending conversation. This is also a way to exercise a theoretical citation, sourced from a different field and revitalized from a somewhat outdated theory.

In the section “How Texts Matter,” I offer a theoretical discussion on how qualitative researchers and other academicians produce ideas by keeping company with people and texts. Following this, in “Citational Considerations,” I describe some complications and ramifications entailed in citation decisions. In the final section, “Writing Activities within and without Citation,” I share writing activities that help us engage with different dimensions of citation, including the writing artifacts from three graduates’ students who generously participated in activities of their choice.

How Texts Matter

Rhetorician Wayne C. Booth (1988) described the relationship between reader and text as one thick with ethical decisions: “What kind of company are we keeping as we read or listen? What kind of company have we kept?” (Booth, 1988, p. 10). These ethical decisions come up because reading is a productive act, enviably impacting the world outside of our imaginations by – depending on one’s philosophical approach to life and materiality— producing/manifesting/constructing something in the material plane. Describing critics, Booth explains, “They know that the powerful stories we tell each other really matter to us—and even the most skeptical theorists imply by their practice that stories do matter ... a criticism that takes their ‘mattering’ seriously cannot be ignored,” (p. 4). What it means to “matter” is two-fold in the qualitative context: something is said to matter when we care about it, taking up space in our lives and needing attention. It also matters by manifesting action, things, and ramifications. We ask if what we read and write is “morally, politically, or philosophically sound? And, is it likely to work for good or ill in those who read it?” (p. 5).

Qualitative researchers today largely embrace the two-fold sense of mattering, understanding that their work matters the most when it does not materialize harmful repercussions for those involved or implicated, but rather, shapes into something good. Many of the foundations of qualitative research formed due to revisions of ethics practiced in other sciences, where the integrity of data, not the integrity of human rights, was lauded as ethics (Lincoln and Guba, 2003, p. 225). Early qualitative research explicitly centered ethics on the integrity of relationships between humans, and new turns continue to revise this, resulting in things like integrity toward non-human relations. While ethical considerations have changed through time, the *mattering* of one’s research is what keeps ethics at the soul of qualitative research (see Lincoln & Canella (2004) and Canella & Lincoln (2004) for their special issues on related topics). These foundations are taken up in the unending conversation qualitative researchers have around their role as writers. Smissart and Jalonon (2018) ask, “When was the last time you felt a deep moral concern about the academic text you were about to write? A time when you could almost sense the pain you might do to others if you did not choose your words carefully enough...?” (p. 704). They use Bakhtin’s concept of answerability to theorize that researchers, as writers of texts, are responsible as *authorizers* of its implications.

Qualitative researchers are thus aware that when texts that are circulated, read, and repeated,

they create things in the world. In Smissart and Jalonen's (2018) example above, the thing created was pain. Writing forms ramifications for those being researched, thus *mattering* in verb-tense, and also forms thought for the researcher. Some qualitative methodologists take this notion seriously enough to argue that writing is not merely a practice done after research, but the form of inquiry itself (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005), a notion that has been discussed in different ways among a variety of scholars (see some examples in Henderson & Black, 2018; Gale & Wyatt, 2006; Fullagar, Pavlidis, & Stadler, 2017; Wyatt & Gale, 2018). The animate capacities of texts could be defended across theories from a variety of paradigms, as part of objects and actants within Actor Network Theory (Latour); discursive formations (Foucault); a thing that "acts" or an element within bricolage (Derrida); performative texts (Austin); lively or vibrant matter (Bennet), and other concepts that deem texts and other things as agential, alive, or similarly capable (Barad, Butler, Chen, Deleuze & Guattari, etc.).

Additionally, qualitative researchers engage in discussions about the company one keeps with texts, including how methodological attitudes and theoretical affinities are important because they will indeed show up in one's writing, mattering as such. As Sarah Bridges-Rhoads (2018) queried regarding her philosophical journal keeping, "I wonder if this writing might somehow speak to questions of how researchers think with and write with philosophical texts in the midst of ongoing pursuits to reimagine and reorder the world" (p. 647). In her description, the researcher's goal in reading philosophy is precisely to reorder the world; in other words, one reads and "thinks with" (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012) theory in the service of conjuring something better into the world.

The abilities contained in texts are, in the words of Burke (1941), like magic. Readers may be affected by the text they read, perhaps even feeling bodily changes upon reading (p. 9-11). Poetry, he writes, is like a series of "'little commands' that fall across one another" like "a lot of 'little spells'" (p. 8). Such crafty commands are not the purview of a lonely writer, but rather, a writer in relationship to others and texts. Beginning in the 1980s, many qualitative researchers adopted the more literary style of academic writing that embraced the multi-vocal, precisely in resistance to the unambiguous, scientific voice (Richardson, 1997, p. 15). German literary critic Walter Benjamin would understand this drive, as he claimed that writing was about stitching so many citations together as to manifest an entirely new entity, more like a collector than writer (Arendt, 1968, p. 42). The animated citations in Benjamin's (1928/1966) work were operationalized to "leap out" like robbers and "relieve the idle stroller of his conviction" (p. 481), helping to animate the text as a whole.

Beyond how a citation will act in a text, choosing citations also entails decisions about the survival of others' ideas. Consider the logic of folk music, a genre typically defined by its conditions of transmission, not its qualities of sound. Peggy Seeger (2017) explained that "oral transmission, communal acceptance, the existence of variants, and the continuity with a received tradition" (p. 133) make a song a folk song. Built into the genre of folk music is the sense that things are always on the cusp of being lost unless someone else takes the notes into their hands, or their words into their mouth, and repeats them. Seeger notes, "The designation of 'folk songs' as distinct from

other kinds of songs had, since its inception, a sense of imminent demise” (p. 134). This is true for all text, given “writing’s relationship with death” (Foucault, 1969, p. 206). Storytellers eluded “death... telling stories into the early morning, in order to forestall death, to postpone the day of reckoning that would silence the narrator” (p. 206). This text, along with others by Roland Barthes, are often cited to explain the “death of the author” trope in post-structuralism, a theory of how texts become the wayward children of authors, having little to do with each other.

In all cases, it is clear that reading and writing have a lot to do with death and survival. In different contexts, however, the eschatological nature of reading and writing changes; like in Zora Neale Hurston’s (1935/1990) *Mules and Men* project, where she wrote up African American Folklore that she collected. It is possible that without her work on this project, these stories that combined African origins and American experiences, told and adapted by those who had once been enslaved in the Americas, would have vanished upon their deaths. In such cases, the citation to the story is the first time it is inscribed into written text, making the “death of the ethnographer” (Dorst, 1987) a different incarnation of the death of the author.

Regardless of the incarnation, with these kinds of stakes, a responsible writer sees that that citations require weighty decisions about granting life. Depending on one’s beliefs about the relationship between author and text, different considerations will be made. Should we disregard everything bad people wrote? Should we stop citing the abundantly-cited, in order to save the almost-forgotten? Do established scholars have a responsibility to cite new scholars, ensuring their security in the parlor? Is a negative citation still good news because it improves metrics? What does it mean that some people get a full name and others need only a last name in their citation? I will walk us through a few ethical considerations that may help us make these decisions, though each reader will also have their own contextual circumstances not covered in this article.

Citational Considerations

Ethical Consideration I: Most likely to be Repeated

Complicating the tasks of diversifying fields by inviting new speakers into the unending conversation, we know that people do not survive the academy by merely being welcomed. Citation ultimately determines “who is then left out of the conversation – directly impact the cultivation of a rich and diverse discipline” and the production of knowledge (Mott and Cockayne, 2017, p. 955). Looking at this with the Burkean parlor metaphor, we see that merely letting someone into the parlor is not enough to solidify their place in academia; we must listen and then *repeat* them before it is too late.

This issue is perhaps more obvious when we consider how some names dominate citations, even though their original theories have been taken in directions that are distinct in themselves, by scholars who get less circulation. Dominant theorists might be cited so often because they remain embedded in theoretical curriculum as canonical, and thus their work is on-hand. Those responsible for theoretical curricula get to make decisions about what to pass on, in this case. It may also be true that these theorists are cited so often because their ideas are remarkable and

nothing else could take their place. Though let us note that in most cases, theorists are enabled to write through material conditions not afforded to all (time, money, support, venue, gender, race, historical period, mentorship). David Harvey, Paulo Freire, and Michel Foucault, and Pierre Bourdieu typically top the various lists of the most cited theorists in social sciences. They are cited in progressive contexts in favor of radical transformations in institutions, especially in qualitative research, though their dominance in citation also serves as evidence of the *sedimentations* of institutions. Can a field like critical pedagogy suffer from idol worship? Or are the words of Freire singular?

In some cases, entire paradigms are named after one person, and thus informal and formal citations happen without the repeat of their actual words, such as in Marxism. Anyone using Marxism in their work would have to refer to Marx, then, simply by claiming their work as Marxian (echo Deleuzian, Kantian, etc.). Kathleen Weiler (2001) described how feminist educational studies scholars have had to carefully consider citing male theorists who historically ignored or excluded women, particularly given that post-structural feminism was influenced by Dewey, Freire, Gramsci, DuBois, Hall, Foucault, and Lacan (p. 1). In addition, they must consider citation in light of their “relationships among women themselves across divides of race, class, and sexuality” (p. 2). Bibliographies made of entirely white men are not a happenstance, argued Sarah Ahmed (2017), saying that “this event has a structure” (p. 148). She posits that even just creating crisis or hesitation about citation would be a positive move (p. 148).

For some, the citational event is inherently political in an academic world in which the “underrepresentation and marginalization of women, people of color, and those othered through white heteromale hegemony” are directly “politics of knowledge and how particular voices and bodies are persistently left out of the conversation altogether” (Mott and Cockayne 2017, p. 955). In citing, we can either reify existing problems, or help solve them by redirecting whose knowledge gets the attention. Amy Hungerford’s (2016) project that reversed the standard “to read” list is a good example, given that she refused to read authors who have womanizing or abusive reputations. What to read, never mind to cite, is already a decision related to social responsibility.

On the other hand, the post-structuralist death of the author suggests that texts can be handled without considering biographical data or the writer’s intention. This innovation in theories impacts reading because it encourages close reading, a method of reading where texts are interpreted with attention toward marginal and nuanced elements within the text itself, with little consideration for things like the author’s biography (Gallop, 2000; 2011). Reading this way “is a method of undoing the training that keeps us to the straight and narrow path of main ideas” (Gallop, 2011, p. 8). Gallop proposed that close reading is an approach not only to texts, but the entire world, helping us avoid making projections in order “to hear what someone else is really saying” (p. 12), as an ethical commitment.

Grappling with these same questions, a fan (2021) wrote to the musician Nick Cave, asking “can we separate the artist from the art?” (n.p.). Scholars too have wondered this with regards to

Heidegger, an inspiring phenomenologist and also, a known and registered Nazi. Jewish theorists who have weighed in on this include Derrida, who acknowledged Heidegger's Nazism without condemnation (Krell, 2015, p. 88) and Arendt (his former student and lover) who continued to read him, largely in order to understand how he transgressed so greatly. Lyotard cited Heidegger heavily, in order to "discredit all of Heidegger's work by attempting to suggest... that all of Heidegger's work is essentially Nazi" (Carroll, 1990, p. xvi). Nick Cave (2021), not answering for Heidegger specifically, suggests that we should not separate the artist from the art, but rather see the art as a "redeemed aspect of the artist" (n.p.). "That bad people make good art is a cause for hope," (n. p.) he instructs.

Such an issue makes one wonder, as Foucault (1986) did, which works count and why, after the death of an author? Could we judge an author on a manuscript that reveals things deleted before a text was published; personal journals; thought fragments never completed; "millions of traces left by someone after his death?" (p. 207). Benjamin (1921/1996) said that when a text has been translated from its original language, it is no longer the original text unless the translator extracted its truth content (according to my English edition of his essay). How do we judge changes made by editors or translators, which may be invisible? How could a text possibly represent an image of an individual, and further, how can an individual represent their texts, which have morphed through time and other mediations?

Perhaps the simplest solution to this is to ask what ethos is contained in a text's discursive formations, its truth content, and if that ethos matches what we as writers hope to project in using that text for a citation. I suggest this approach because it honors the hopefulness of Cave's wisdom—and the quest for understanding within Arendt—but also validates boundary-making of Hungerford. The writer might ask if a citation contains the kind of ethos they wish to conjure into the world. They might assume their work contains a kind of ontological potential, following Kathleen Stewart's (1991) idea that "discourse does not reflect on an extraverbal situation the way a mirror reflects an object," but rather it acts: "it resolves a situation, brings it to an evaluative conclusion, or extends action into the future" (p. 397). An example of doing this would be deciding to integrate a canonical source, only so long as it avoids "the masculinist voice of abstraction... 'one who knows'" (Patti Lather, 2001, p. 184), thereby attending the way that source acts more than who it came from. Perhaps though, so much depends on the purpose the writer has for a citation, a topic that must be addressed next.

Ethical Consideration II: Citational Purposes

While receiving and giving citation is always valuable in academia, the purposes of those citations exist across a spectrum of value. A citation will raise metrics, but it does not actually indicate admiration. In fact, citation does not even require that the citing author/text has engaged with the author/text being cited. As Van Cleave and Bridges-Rhoads (2013) pointed out, writers use "as cited in" to suggest that they have not read the original, though all citation styles discourage this. Parish (2009) claimed that "arguments are made possible only by the scholar's 'manipulation' of the available data in order to build his or her case. After all, a map is only useful if it 're-presents' the territory in a new way" (p. 437-438). Given that scholarship is a conversation, we rely on the

words of others to complement our supposedly original arguments, but how we go about using the citations is really a craft of manipulating someone else's work in such a way that it can be patched with our own.

Part of the academic writer's craft is to do such integration in a graceful manner without too many seams showing. One part of the peer reviewer's craft is to catch any erroneous uses of theoretical concepts that have been cited, so that integrity remains. Even so, some concepts have such traction that they no longer require direct citation or engagement with the explanatory text. These are conceptual commonplaces, many of which are frequently cited wrongheadedly. For example, Butler's gender performance; Foucault's panopticon; Deleuze's rhizome; Nietzsche's "god is dead"; and Burke's parlor metaphor can all escape close reading. Once someone "knows" what the concept means, they might even miss evidence of it meaning something else, given that all people too often read for what we expect to find (Gallop, 2000, p. 10). By no means is this the paramount of problems, but it does serve as good evidence that engagement is not a criterion for citation.

Further, there are ways to mobilize theories in directions far from authorial intention, through citation, then elaboration. Patricia Hill Collins (2002) explained that even an idea that disrupts operations of power, like Black feminist thought, "in order to be comprehensible and legitimated, it must use the constructs, paradigms, and epistemologies of those discourses" that are already known in academia (p. 41). Her work shows postmodernism doing work for Black Feminist Thought, for example. Kantian ethics has been used toward protecting the rights of women, animals, and vulnerable populations, even though Kant contemporarily reads like an anti-queer racist. Theories can also be maliciously adapted—like Latour being used in dangerous anti-science arguments, Deleuze toward justifications of violence, and Nietzsche used among Nazis. As Michael Scott said, "how the turntables" (Daniels, et al, 2009). In these cases, citations are taking place, but only as loose inspiration or purposeful manipulation (toward good or bad ends).

Least complicatedly, citations are required when one wishes to assault another text—*it is not personal, it is just critique*, one might say. Rhetorically, it is easier to launch an argument by citing what one is reacting against. In this case, citation metrics increase but these numbers have nothing to do with admiration. We could, instead, enact a generous scholarship, where citation is used to "publicly express gratitude" (Russell, 2016, p. 9), rather than for critique or literature review. Generous scholarship defies the training of some academicians, with all its "anxious posturing, the vigilant search for mistakes and limitations... the way that critique becomes a reflex, the sense that things are urgent yet pointless, the circulation of the latest article tearing apart bad habits and behaviors, the way shaming others becomes comfortable" (Montgomery & bergman, 2017, p. 20). That quote was originally written to describe bad activist habits, but I use it here for describing academia. As Lu (1999), who self identifies as a social justice scholar, admits, "In my private thoughts, feelings, and visceral reactions, I have not always practiced critical affirmation when responding to others in the field" (p. 173).

All of this speaks to how citation is a complicated act that can be directed at many purposes.

Because citation helps a text or academic continue to survive, it is always valuable; however, the presentation of a citation falls along a wide spectrum of value. As qualitative researchers and educators, it is normal to thoughtfully weigh how to integrate students, research participants, and communities who we study into our writing. It is far less common, however, for us to prudently consider how we are representing and presenting the work of other scholars within the text. Do we cite their work in admiration, with depth of engagement, and with a fair assessment? Did we read their work lazily or cite them to tear their idea down? It is acceptable in academia to do the latter, and most of us do, but neither should be testaments to ethics.

Ethical Consideration III: Citation for Survival

No wonder so many have anxiety when thinking about academic writing—the stakes for publishing and receiving citations are high. This claim is the most self-evident, needing very little explanation. Citation has material impact on living scholars, particularly unestablished ones who need citation metrics to prove relevance to neoliberal higher education culture, where citations aid hiring and tenure. And similarly, high citation metrics seem to even operate as proof of a successful life. Hamed Yaghoobian recently sent me a Tweet that read: “Just went for a walk in a cemetery and a guy has a QR code on his grave stone that links to a list of his publications and citation metrics” (@justinjoque, October 10, 2020). Whatever the motivation, something like this reveals that concern for citation metrics apparently linger right through death preparations.

Less morbidly, citation for survival more likely simply refers to establishing one’s place in the parlor. Russell (2016) explained how some have formed citation cartels among friends in order to get noticed (p. 9). I mention this consideration here because as Russell noted, “established scholars” can “make a difference by spending their privilege” in various ways. Reading widely and differently is essential, given that we “cannot cite what we have not read,” to “proactively disrupt the hegemonic politics of reading and citation” (p. 8). Upon discussing this with those who contributed writing artifacts, I learned that as graduate students, the notion of survival through metrics was on their mind not as a future-problem, but as one that had to be solved before the future arrives, before the job market, and indeed, like we said of the parlor, before it is too late.

Interestingly, this relates to qualitative methodology very specifically if we look at something like Norman Denzin’s (2016) call for critical qualitative inquiry. He defined critical qualitative work with a few traits, including an intervention into the audit culture of the neoliberal university, and an expansion of epistemological representation. While he is actually talking about interpretation, both of these core traits could be so easily applied to citation. Audit culture is precisely what causes anxiety over citation, given that it operates heavily through citation metrics. To combat audit culture in qualitative methods means to disrupt it through some means—perhaps by consciously raising the metrics of certain kinds of work and not contributing to other kinds. Further, epistemological representation is not limited to participants in our studies, but also could be applied to the idea of new research, graduate student ideas, under-cited populations, and so forth. It seems that one of the easiest ways to enact a kind of critical qualitative inquiry would be to cite, when possible, the work of early-career scholars, graduate students, undergraduates, and those who are otherwise marginal in their field.

Writing Activities within and without Citation

In considering the complexities of citation, close reading often supplies some amount of remedy for many of these issues. As Keenan (1997) describes, there is an “eagerness of a reading that wants to skip over the interpretation to get to the change, that wants to know how to relate general principles to immediately questions,” (p. 102). In such cases, he prescribed Marx’s own suggestion: “patience. Impatience frustrates reading, and leads to change without interpretation, passionately immediate—and thus unprincipled—answers” (p. 102). In this frame, reading slowly and carefully places us in the scene of the parlor, not merely poised to respond, but also listening like a black hole. Careful reading gets us to “a response to something, responsible to it, responsive to it, respectful of it. In any ethical moment there is an imperative, some ‘I must’” (p. 4). Listening widely and carefully to many voices remedies many citation issues.

This entails the ethics of response, that “space beyond status morality and vapid self-interest” that attends to “the relationships that make us up” (Montgomery and bergman, 2017, p. 90), whether they exist between people or things. To engage in the responsive quality of the parlor, that dialectic of relationships that allows us to create something new, the next section includes writing activities to which you or your students may respond. They are not free writing, but rather guided and direct short assignments that bring out reflection on acts of citation. Three of the activities are accompanied by writing artifacts so that some amount of response could be captured here.

I end with these writing activities and artifacts so you are prompted to end the listening period and enter into the conversation. If you do, consider sharing your thoughts with me. While I do not assess or reflect upon the writing artifacts others contributed in this article, I did privately respond to all of them. One often-invisible dimension of the parlor is the craft of practice, feedback, peer review, and instructor response that takes place. All of these activities are reasonable in the classroom context and can lead to good conversations about reading and writing. The emboldened text is the title of the assignment, which is followed by concise and exact directions for writing.

Homemade Citation Consideration. What worries you about the topic of citation? Tell me all about it.

Sample Artifact from Hamed Yaghoobian:

The boundaries of citational rectitude in sciences, at least historically, are demarcated more by a concern for objectivity and validity and less so by the societal ramification of citations. Practitioners of science pay more attention to the content rather than the context in citing. One reason that scholars do not necessarily concern themselves with the underlying rhetorical assumptions in their everyday scientific pursuits is that citation counts and recency of published work are viewed as measures of quality and impact. This lack of concern further adumbrates the social construction of scientific facts and knowledge, or *science in making*, as Bruno Latour writes. Latour argues that a text becomes *scientific* when “the number of people engaged in publishing it are many and explicitly indicated in the text.” Further, for the statements to be established as facts, the text should be brought in and read. The number of external friends accompanying the

text becomes an indication of its strength, to an extent, where the absence of which turns a work of science into fiction (Latour 1987, p. 33). This phenomenon underscores the collective process of science. If the work of a scientist fails to get noticed or stops to incur citation, however chaotically, her statements will never achieve the status of scientific facts. So what should her text do in order to be read, acknowledged, believed, and not discarded or neglected?

Contrasting citation count as a performance measure, Latour highlights that the boundaries of technical and social dimensions of scientific practices are blurry. Besides, the social nature of the process of knowledge construction entails some level of externality for the text, meaning that the use of the text is outside the control of the author upon publishing. However, academics today rely on social media, particularly Twitter, to stay abreast of the new research trends while also drawing in readership to promote their own work. Toward greater and faster expression of agency, researchers have utilized digital communication along with preprint to reach a broader audience; however, ironically, these behaviors have shown to further reinforce hierarchies that already exist in academia (Linek, 2017). This social phenomenon is similar to a Matthew effect (Merton, 1968), in which the already imminent and visible scholars attract more visibility and attention. Therefore, within this reward system, the individual scholar at the early stages of their development stands to gain visibility only through collaboration with scientists of acknowledged standing. Which presents the same dilemma confronting scholars regarding whom they would like to make allies with, both in text and practice. At the end of the day, extrapolating possible futures to understand which representations and “facts” we would most like to emulate or amplify, as Latour contends, is that same task of understanding who the people are (Latour 1987, p. 140)

Fan Mail. Write an email to a living writer of any sort. Tell them of a specific text and even a specific line that you appreciate from their work. Ask for no advice or favors in return. Title your email “Fan Mail.”

Sample Artifact from Jennifer Tesler:

Dear Kevin,

My name is Jennifer Tesler. I’m a high school English teacher in Athens, GA. Twenty years ago, while I was finishing my undergraduate degree in the English Department at the University of Georgia where you taught, I took your African American Poetry class. I don’t expect you to remember me, but it was one of the most memorable courses I took.

Yesterday, I was driving with my sons, rehearsing the moves for the Zoom lesson that I would soon teach. I was listening to Morning Edition on NPR just loud enough to muffle the bantering children in my back seat and I experienced a kind of *deja vu*. I was sure that I recognized the voice on the radio. “That’s Kevin Young, ya’ll,” I said. It was strange to recall so clearly a voice that I had not heard in over twenty years. Yet, there it was, clear as day.

I recognized your voice, and it took me back to the late 1990s. I vividly remember sitting in Park Hall listening to you relate music to poetry. As you spoke about the rhythm and cadence of jazz

and poetry, I could tell that you were the real deal. You played us John Coltrane, Giant Steps. You introduced me to the poetry of Lucille Clifton, Jean Toomer, Amiri Baraka and Claude McKay. We admired Romare Bearden's collages, Jean-Michel Basquiat and Jacob Lawrence's paintings. I started going to poetry readings. I drove into Atlanta to listen to Yusef Komunyakaa read at Emory and was sure that life couldn't get any better. Then, Elizabeth Alexander came into town and read from *The Venus Hottentot*, and that blew me away.

Fast forward to yesterday. Our guest speaker, a friend of mine from grad school, Damaris Dunn, was scheduled to share her personal narrative about contracting Covid-19, *Black Joy is Not Canceled* with my class. It was recently published in The Brooklyn Rail. That was on my mind as I neared school, still listening on NPR, and you spoke about making meaning and making connections through writing. You read, *I saw Emmitt Till At The Grocery Store*, by Eve L. Ewing. I held on to the cadence, the rhythm again of the spoken words. I held the plum and I held onto your analysis of the organic that contains a history. Our class had also just read Alice Walker's essay, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*. I couldn't help but connect the two. I thought about both, the injustice lining the dusty roads and the seeds of creativity planted by anonymous Black mothers, embedded within the impenetrable Georgia red clay, beautiful, joyful and hopeful.

Damaris killed it in class. She is an amazing writer and was on point with the students. They created a collaborative poem that I have added to the bottom of this letter.

Later, chatting over coffee, Damaris told me the work she participated in at Schomburg Center before coming down to Athens to start her Ph.D. She spoke with such pride and joy about her Schomburg people, and as she was telling me, I reached down into my backpack and pulled out [The Garden Thrives](#), the anthology that we read in your class. I had pulled it off the shelf awhile back and was holding it close for teaching inspiration. It was a pretty cool moment and I thought it was worth a short note of appreciation.

Tomorrow, I will talk with my class about the Schomburg Center, my college professor and how all of the dots connected Tuesday and made strange synchronous sense. I hope that it will resonate and inspire them to create.

Thank you for opening my world twenty years ago to the beauty and brilliance of Black poetry and Black culture and thank you for re-entering my world yesterday!

Congratulations on your new position as Director of the National Museum of African Culture! That's pretty dope.

Wishing you all the best,

Jennifer Tesler

Gifts of Extravagant Surprise. Write a paper that uses no sources other than any of the things listed here. Cite: artists discussing their art; graduate student published papers; overheard

conversations; fiction; students from class; scholars of marginal status; papers that have never been cited before; traditional folk songs; juvenilia; published letters; magazine interviews with famous women; TV characters; idioms from your family; mantras for bad days; museum brochures; game directions; music lyrics; etc.

Sample artifact from Matthew Harris:

While discussing the coronavirus quarantine in a geography seminar, Akanksha Sharma, an ecology graduate student, posed the question, “I wonder what aspects of myself I haven’t yet found because of the places I haven’t been” (personal communication, October 2020). Her question flipped my understanding of *place* on its head. It is typical for human geographers to treat place as *space imbued with meaning*, where space is changing and socially produced through human encounters and connections, and within that flux we find pockets of stability in places. When more than one group claims a place, or struggles over antagonist meanings, a politics of place can emerge that closes off those connections and active moments of creation. I thought about Sharma’s question for the rest of the conversation and left wondering what sense of place could enable us to be attuned to, or even haunted by, the latent dimensions of ourselves that become animated through our encounters with new places?

In addition to describing locations and how they form, place offers a rich set of metaphors for understanding our relationships with each other and our environments. But places can also be deceptively slippery; while they are often named at particular locations, the scale range is so wide that it can feel pointless to think of place in these terms. A place can be named anywhere from the location of a single hair on someone’s skin all the way to the solar system. And many places simply cannot be found in physical locations: “Neither here nor there / Always somewhat out of place everywhere... somewhere halfway” sings Mariah Carey (1997), describing her experience being biracial as a place. While signaling the ways in which identity and belonging are profoundly spatial, her metaphors—here, there, everywhere, somewhere, and Outside, the song’s title—are all places that cannot be located without their context; they are temporary and exist within, between, and beyond our social and spatial categories.

Mariah Carey’s words remind us of the deep relationship between people and place. Similar to how visible characteristics like skin color seemingly naturalize racial differences, the physicality of locations—a glassy skyscraper, a broken slide in a playground, or a meadow along a river bank—all seemingly normalize the differences between places and who belongs *where*. It can be difficult to untangle our experiences of places from the people we encounter within them. It is not always clear where one ends and the other begins, nor the historic and persistent role they play within the constitution of each other. Related to a dark reading of Sharma’s question about our unearthed selves waiting to emerge from places we haven’t been, geographers can be cautious in studies of the relationship between people and place in a world where theories of environmental determinism have been used to justify the oppression of people deemed “inferior” based on the places they call home.

Emily Dickinson (1960) expressed optimism in our ability to find somewhere better: “We trust – in places perfecter / Inheriting Delight / Beyond our faint Conjecture – / Our dizzy Estimate –” (242). Dickinson theorizes place as temporal; she trusts in place, she looks to places that could bring joy by exceeding the limitations we face. Dickinson writes of places in ways that rhyme with horizons, perhaps we may never reach this place, but it is somewhere to look, a way of locating our aspirations or ideals.

Later in a text message, Sharma’s exclaimed, “life is connection” (2020). Place is where connection happens, place and connection require each other, perhaps the sense of place needed is a displacement of our emphasis on place in favor of an emphasis on connection.

Find & Replace. Edit a paper or talk that you have in progress. Find any canonical scholars that you cite. Replace them with relatively unknown scholars. Present them with great authority.

Presentation is Everything. If you have a paper you have been working on in which you cite a living scholar harshly, see if that act is necessary. Can you add praise alongside the critique? Can you forgive them and delete that part? Can you write them and clarify the idea, then cite their email?

Trash into Treasure. Some things should probably die and not circulate. After all, digital rubbish is real. Liberate yourself from the chains of an old paper that is not working for you and tell its story without academia at all. Make it into a playlist, send to a music-loving friend. Delete the paper from your computer and your cloud.

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