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Introduction: confronting time in educational research

One of the great paradoxes of conducting empirical research is the Western construct of time which is dominated by a progress narrative of perpetually moving forward, away from antiquity towards civilization (Bury, 1980). “Progress” is made as “new” knowledge is “discovered” and gaps in the knowledge archive are filled (Patel, 2015). Yet, while documenting the present, empirical researchers are always scribing the past. Reality continues moving further away from the moment in time captured by the data, as the researcher is ostensibly making “progress”. Time is reduced to past-future, collapsing the present into nothing more than the moment when the researcher captured what was in order to recalibrate the course for forward movement to some unnamed (perhaps illusory) future destination. Furthermore, when time is cast as linear, the multiplicity of reality is parsed apart, isolated into separate timelines, which means critical intersections, interactions, and reactions between events are easily discarded or overlooked. Research of this sort is akin to driving a horse with blinders down a straight path. Supposedly, each linear knowledge path, documented completely will contribute to a composite picture of the totality of knowledge. However, linear research prohibits complex understanding of the world because it cannot account for the spaces in between different knowledge threads, and it cannot anticipate the unexpected crossings of knowledge paths and the trajectories they might yield.

Linear research might prevent someone from exploring and identifying intersections between disparate social phenomena. Consider, for instance, the inaccuracy of scientific modeling projections of the impact on the coronavirus pandemic on African nations (Chow, 2020) and the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on African American populations in the United States (Millet et al., 2020). In the first instance, we see scientific research skewed by racist assumptions about “developing” African nations as “uncivilized”. In the second we see a “developed” and “civilized” nation with greater viral spread, overall mortality rate, and disproportionate impact on Black communities. In linear research, these two simultaneously occurring phenomena are studied separately. They take place in different nations (Uganda and United States),
and they deal with different subjects (epidemiological modeling versus social impact of disease). Yet, postformal research can illuminate how the intersections between these phenomena speak volumes about how anti-Black racism operates as a global institution of oppression resulting in epistemological and material consequences for Black people across multiple domains of social life. If the goal of research is to gain a rich, panoramic understanding of the world, the possibility for knowledge generation is truncated when research is bound by linearity and restricted to a backward gaze and forward movement toward Eurocentric notions of “progress”. In this chapter, we demonstrate postformal method as alternative to so-called “progress-oriented” empirical research by recognizing the artificiality of uni-directional timelines and Western progress narratives that bind the parameters of what is knowable and doable in education, research, and the social world.

From postformal theory to postformal method

In a 1993 Harvard Educational Review article, Joe Kincheloe and Shirley Steinberg described a critical cognitive theory for education called “post-formalism”. Postformalism problematizes linear, mechanistic ways of thinking about knowledge and learning, and therefore, learners and their development. Specifically, it challenges theories of learning that are informed by the philosophies of (1) Jean Piaget who, based on research about White middle-class boys, posited that all children develop psychologically in approximately the same way through a series of stages that are at first rudimentary and become more complex as they grow older, (2) Enlightenment philosopher Rene Descartes who presumed that knowledge in one’s mind is separate from and superior to experiences of the body, and (3) Sir Isaac Newton who asserted that all of the world is organized by universal truths that can be discovered by empirically documenting, measuring, and predicting future outcomes using mathematics.

Postformalism rejects the notion that the world is mechanical and organized by some underlying universal truth. Instead, postformalism expands awareness and raises questions about how the presupposition of universal truth is representative of one particular Eurocentric truth that is not shared by all humanity. Furthermore, that one belief is fundamentally flawed because it is narrow in scope and often used as a means for justifying the oppression of marginalized social groups who do not fit into the pre-established norms defined by the experiences of one particular group of people. By drawing inspiration from postmodernism, justice-oriented aspects of modernism, critical theories, feminist theories, liberation theology, African American and indigenous ways of knowing, postformalism challenges narrow conceptions of what counts as knowledge and, therefore, standardization and testing movements in education that presuppose knowledge is quantifiable.

As explained by Kincheloe (1999), postformalism emerged as a response to the contradictions students experienced between the deadening effects of technorationalism (i.e., the assumption that life is systematic, uniform, and
mechanical) that was permeating both schools and workplaces in 20th-century U.S. society. In contrast with the uninspiring, systematic “learning” of technorationalism in schools, in the real world students experience hyperreality that is technologically rich, inundated by rapid information flows, yet few means of critically analyzing information. For Kincheloe, classic psychological frameworks like behaviorism and developmentalism, both of which dominate education in the United States, are insufficient for making sense of intelligence and learning in hyperreality. Moreover, he posited that young people can see through the artificiality of the so-called learning they experience, which results in resistance, boredom, shutting down, and acting out. Postformal cognitive psychology takes into account the totality of people’s lived experiences in a complex and wholly unknowable world by rejecting the notion that people learn and grow in stages, that learning is divorced from experience, and that learning takes place strictly in one’s mind.

The technorationalist worldview presumes students come into schools as blank slates, and all of them should be learning the same things in the same ways at the same time. It discounts how students’ social and cultural knowledge from home may be different, which may impact student performance in classrooms and on standardized exams. For instance, White middle-class children may appear to be stronger academically when in fact they are drawing from their home knowledge that aligns with the expectations of schools. Test scores may indicate an “achievement gap” when it seems lower income students and students of color are not performing at the same norm as their White middle-class peers. In contrast, postformalism moves beyond the limits of formal logic and reconnects multiple ways of knowing to better understand what children know that is not measured or valued by the test and the education system in question. Postformalism asks questions about the child’s experiences in schools and how technorationalist structures and practices may get in the way of teachers recognizing, valuing, and leveraging children’s unique knowledges and talents. Postformalism encourages school adults to problematize what they think they know by tapping into their sensory experiences, autobiographical histories, and deeper structures of knowledge through analogy, metaphor, art, and emotion to identify when schools’ structures are liberating or oppressive so that they can act upon them and change them (Kincheloe & Thomas, 2006).

When put to work for critical educational research, postformalism utilizes rogue methods that might not be recognized as “empirical” or “valid” by formal research traditions. The postformal researcher is a rule-breaker who disrupts assimilated knowledge and provokes cognitive dissonance through new lines of inquiry and learning that intentionally engage with difference. Consider the ideas that might emerge when juxtaposing a student’s grades and test scores with an artistic rendering of that student’s self-image as a learner and again with an artistic rendering of students like them in popular culture. Unlike empiricists who limit their research within the confines of what constitutes “valid” research, the postformal researcher’s rougeness stems from their attempt to break free from those exact confines. While Piagetian formalism tends to
cast learning as assimilation of knowledge into pre-existing worldviews, post-
formalism privileges critical accommodation, “the continuous criticism and
reconstruction of what one thinks she knows” (Kincheloe, 1999, p. 14). The
goal of this mode of thinking is for researchers to come to new awareness of
how tacit knowledge gleaned from one’s own upbringing and enculturation
in society insidiously informs one’s practice and may make them complicit in
maintaining systemic oppressions. Postformal researchers dive beneath taken-
for-granted understandings of the world to access deeper knowledge for exam-
ining unique problems and detecting structural patterns. By having a more
critical understanding of one’s own assumptions and how they uphold or chal-
lenge dominant power arrangements, one can turn upon oppressive habits and
catalyze change.

To operationalize a postformal research method, researchers approach their
work with four constructs at the forefront: (1) etymology, (2) pattern, (3) pro-
cess, and (4) contextualization. This is not, however, a step-by-step endeavor.
Researchers move through these constructs as they pursue answers to their
questions, and new questions and movements will emerge as a result of their
explorations. Each construct involves its own particular dispositions and activi-
ties designed to lead the researcher to delve under the surface of daily life
to generate abstract understandings of concrete reality, which is then decon-
structed and recontextualized to raise awareness of how (1) hegemony operates
in people’s lives, and (2) embedded systemic oppressions can be ferreted out
and changed (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1999).

1 Etymology – postformal researchers question the origins of knowledge,
how they know what they think they know, and how their location in the
web of reality informs their worldviews. They engage in meta-cognition
(thinking about thinking) to seek out conflicts and contradictions, giv-
ing rise to unique questions they may choose to investigate (e.g., why is
Whiteness not represented as a culture in a multicultural curriculum?)

2 Pattern – postformal researchers approach the social world as layered and
interconnected, seeking out underlying patterns that tie different people
and events to each other through discourse, power, ideology, and material-
ity. They use metaphors as organizational and analytical tools for identify-
ing and exploring underlying interconnections and relationships between
disparate ideas and events.

3 Process – postformal researchers read the world as text; they deconstruct,
read between the lines, and expose unnoticed contradictions. They look
for what is and isn’t said, pointing out areas of blindness and their implica-
tions, but also recognizing uncertainty of meaning – there are no closed
texts and no final truth. They reconnect cognition and emotion, recog-
nizing the significance of emotional intensity as an indicator of embod-
ied knowledge that can be explored and investigated for insight. They
challenge Cartesian-Newtonian cause-effect linearity, which assumes that
every action has an equal and opposite reaction predetermined by laws of
physics. In education, this might translate into an equation that goes something like this: Student + Standardized Content = Amount of Knowledge in relation to the Norm. Therefore, student < normal, student = normal, or student > normal. These equations tell a story that assumes all students should be achieving at or above a predetermined norm. This is how we can understand the student’s supposed “aptitude” (+, −, or = to norm). But a postformal method might focus instead on how the effect of the test score outcome can define a cause. It is the normed score at the end of the equation that defines which students are normal or not. The individual learner and what they know beyond the confines of the exam is irrelevant. A postformal researcher might flip the equation, deconstructing the norm itself by investigating its origins and effects on students. Hence, the final product of a series of events or circumstances gives definition to the meaning of the cause-effect. The cause-effect process does not necessarily or neatly lead to an inevitable outcome. Furthermore, the meaning of a single part of a process can never be separated from the whole of the meaning of the product.

Contextualization – postformal researchers pay attention to the context of knowledge, which is what gives knowledge its meaning and form. They recognize the interactions between the particular and the general, and they use place as a way of connecting them, since place grounds abstract ideas through particular ways of knowing the world. Place and context link knowledge with emotion through the visceral insights of experience. Through context and experience, postformal researchers can trace the way power shapes lives through policies, traditions, institutions, norms, discourse, and practices.

Finally, we posit a fifth construct: postformal researchers enter their work with a sense of humility. They are self-conscious, recognizing that a postformal method is just one way of many for investigating the world, and that it is a journey toward transformation not a destination in itself. Hence, postformal method resembles what Kincheloe (2005) describes as bricolage. Postformal researchers traverse disciplinary boundaries and social fields, journeying through different lenses to bring a multiperspectival analysis to bear on the issue at hand. Rather than using predetermined lenses, postformal researchers have a tool kit where they mix and match pieces to compose a mosaic of the object of their analysis. They may have to do additional research to explain phenomena that their tool kits and prior knowledge cannot readily articulate. Or, they may need to cross social fields, use popular culture, science, art, literature, and/or the natural world to shed light on their explorations. Emergent knowledge from postformal theoretical research takes form multiply like many colored glass beads turning in a kaleidoscope (Kress, Lake, Buechner, & Cox-Vineyard, 2019).

For example, Tricia has used optical physics, specifically light diffraction to understand how neoliberal consumerism as a form of pedagogy co-opts and contains youth indignation and resistance (Kress, 2017). She used the metaphor
of a prism to illustrate how socially progressive music is filtered through the neo-liberal music industry and then commodified and sold back to fans as t-shirts and coffee mugs. Fans can feel good about their anti-capitalist values expressed by their choice in music while also upholding the same structures they denounce.

In another publication, Tricia and Robert explored the connections between bee colony collapse disorder and standardization in U.S. schools to shed light on the deadening effects of neoliberalism in the living worlds of both schools and the biosphere (Kress & Lake, 2016). Using a rhizomatic approach we traced interconnected roots of both phenomena to illuminate how deep epistemological structures of neoliberalism, modernism, and positivism disregard the interdependent nature of life which results in destruction of living things. This example illustrates the usefulness of postformal method because if we were to take a formal, linear approach to investigating student engagement we might consider psychological and/or environmental factors with the goal of identifying which factors ought to be changed to alter the behavior of the learner or teacher. By unearthing deep structures using a postformal method we were able to challenge the very epistemological assumptions that were positioning learners as objects isolated in a static context, which gave rise to new ways of thinking about learners and learning environments as dynamic and interconnected.

Modeling a postformal method: examining chronos, kairos, and the fabric of time

In this section we use the previously mentioned tenets to model a postformal method as we explore the Western construct of “time” and articulate how it has shaped the Western worldview and informed discursive and institutional structures. We juxtapose “time” with the educational policy mandate of Adequate Yearly Progress, illuminating how AYP “time” is bound up with multiple other space-times and therefore experienced differently by different people. To provide a roadmap, here we articulate some questions that would guide this inquiry. In the interest of transparency, we do not always articulate actual questions to get started. Sometimes, postformal inquiry begins with a gut feeling, musing, or strange connection. We often experience a sensation of “something is not right” or “something is happening”, which leads us to identify multiple different phenomena where we see “not right” or “happening” manifesting. That leads us to examine and articulate our connections by seeking out different lenses for meaning making.

For ease of understanding, the following list approximates our musings and feelings in question form to illuminate how the process works, though in actuality it is not as tidy as this.

- What are the features of “time” in dominant Western worldviews?
  - How does Western “time” regulate what and how we know?
  - How does Western “time” regulate research as both process and product?
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• Where/when do we see the features of Western “time” at work? How might we describe them as an abstract pattern?
• How are the features of Western “time” operationalized in society and to what effects?
  • How is Western “time” experienced differently by different people and across different domains?
  • What contradictions emerge from disparate experiences of time?
• How do the contradictions of experiencing Western “time” illuminate Western “time” as discourse and ideology?
  • What other ways might we think about time to provide new understandings of the natural and social worlds? What opportunities are there to deconstruct and reconstruct “time” in order to change material conditions that result in differential experiences of “time” across different domains?

The framing questions roughly map to the constructs we delineated earlier. But again, the process is not linear; we may move up and down the list of questions sometimes even changing the central focus of our examination because what we uncover is different from the ideas we had when entering the research. The following sections answer these questions by examining “time” through the postformal constructs of etymology, pattern, process, and contextualization.

Etymology: unearthing the epistemological roots of “time”

To demonstrate a postformal method, we begin with an etymological unearthing of the epistemological roots of “time” by using “chronos” and “kairos”, two different kinds of time recognized by the Ancient Greeks. Smith (1969) explains, Western time has never simply been limited to linear progress narratives, despite the fact that progress is what dominates contemporary Western conceptualizations of time. The Western progress narrative is closely tied to chronos, the quantifiable notion of time that informs Newtonian physics. Chronos allows one to measure time in length, speed, and duration. It also links time and place, creating an understanding of distance between time periods, events, or geographical locations, and it affords a means of organizing time via clocks and calendars. As a basic metric, chronological time (i.e., chronos) allows for documenting progress through measurement, particularly expansion or contraction as objects under investigation increase or decrease in quality or quantity over time. In contrast, kairos is about the qualitative nature of time and the ordinal positioning of events in history. It allows one to describe what a time is like when a certain event happens, while chronos allows one to describe what happened at a particular moment. Kairos allows for thinking about not just metrics or progress but rather how events are linked to constellations of other events in historical timelines across different geographical
locations. While chronos has a linear trajectory of forward movement, a singular track by which history moves forward, kairos is multi-directional and multi-dimensional, more like a spider web that has interconnected lines and spirals at different scales that are all connected through the links that bind them to each other. The linearity of chronos mirrors formalist research’s singular path toward discovering universal truths, while kairos mirrors the spiraling, multi-directional, multi-dimensional postformal method.

As a comparison, public schools are evaluated under the metric of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). This progress-based metric is dependent upon chronological time (i.e., chronos), specifically 365 days which is a measurable length of time called “one year”. A school must make sufficient progress toward a predetermined marker of academic achievement for their student body. Whether or not that goal is attainable in one particular place during that particular time is irrelevant. In chronos time, if the goal is attained in that length of time, progress is made. If the goal is not attained, progress is not made. Yet, kairos allows us to draw a link between AYP and Darwin’s theory of natural selection. These are two very different things, but underlying both is a worldview that assumes progressive change happens to all entities, organizations and organisms alike, and that adaptations will result in improvements to the entities (i.e., species) or else they will cease to exist (i.e., they will phase out or die out). While chronos can be thought of as a ruler or tape measure, kairos can be thought of as a piece of fabric.

In kairos time, AYP could be understood for its implications for the school community in question. Postformal method would consider many different events and sources of activity that go into preparing to meet AYP: the school adopts a curriculum which provides knowledge to students taking an exam which was adopted by the state; teachers receive professional development to help them deliver the curriculum and prepare students for the exam; students read books, watch videos, complete activities in school and at home, have discussions with peers or family members, take practice tests, and then take the actual test; the state evaluates the numerical data of whether or not AYP has been met. Some of those events may happen simultaneously or at different times, and each of them can also be thought of as its own event, linked to other events. For instance, teacher professional development (PD) could be linked to other kinds of teacher professional development across past or present space-time, which would give different meaning to the AYP professional development in relation to other kinds of PD. Yet, the character of the event of AYP evaluation is determined by the outcome: If the school fails to meet AYP all sorts of negative consequences could be triggered (e.g., sanctions, school reforms, administrative turnover, loss of funding). If the school passes, the event is a victory that triggers neutral or positive effects. Postformal method would shed light on the relationships between the micro-level activities of the school community, macro social and historical patterns of classifying schools and students as “failing”, and meso-level school and community responses to “failure” or fear of “failure”.
Pattern: tracing “time” and its manifestations

To begin identifying patterns related to AYP, we return here to Western “time” to identify the pattern of “progress” as an organizing feature recognizable in various aspects of Western cultures, including the organization of life, work, and education. For instance, Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution traces the developmental path from simple to more complex organisms. Developmental psychology delineates stages that people advance through from infancy to adulthood. Abraham Maslow (1954) delineated a hierarchical order of human needs that a person must acquire before one can reach their full potential (i.e., self-actualization). In 1956, Benjamin Bloom put forth *A Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*, which created stages of learning from knowledge acquisition to application. And both Taylorism and Fordism were predicated on the belief that efficiency and industrialization led to more advanced forms of labor, production, and social organization. Indeed, Western history is often presented holistically as a tale of linear development, as European societies moved out of the Dark Ages, through the Enlightenment, and into expansion and industrialization. The history of the United States is also presented in a similar way from colonial “discovery” to frontier expansion and the birth of cities and industries.

The Western preoccupation with stage-based progression is apparent throughout U.S. society, which prioritizes expediency and efficiency to drive consumerism. In some ways, the progress narrative can be positive as it encourages innovation, ingenuity, problem solving, and change. It provides a hopeful outlook, encouraging people, industries, and societies to continually improve their performance. However, this narrative also feeds into problematic ideologies like incrementalism which assumes social change happens slowly like evolution of species, and each moment is potentially an improvement upon conditions of the previous moment and a step in the direction of progress. This grand narrative of progress-based time regulates how people are allowed to understand how social change happens and why there is persistently entrenched injustice over time. Incrementalism distinguishes between times that were more unjust than the contemporary moment, which justifies contemporary injustice by quantifying its quality. An incrementalist rebuttal to White privilege and institutionalized racism would sound something like, “But look at the progress that has been made. {Insert oppressed group here} have greater rights and freedoms than they did {insert quantity} years ago”. The assumption here is that injustice is measurable and that some injustice is “lesser” in quantity and therefore more acceptable than less evolved/more severe past injustice. This perspective misses the systemic nature of injustice and the significance of social struggle by assuming, (1) society is working through its developmental stages, and (2) injustice would go away over time if society were left to its natural course of development. In contrast, by tracing patterns across space-times, a postformal method would illuminate injustice embedded in society, manifesting itself in new forms over time.
A postformal researcher focused on AYP would problematize the very notion that AYP represents “progress”. A postformal researcher might instead seek out the roots of what the discourse of “progress” means in the context of school reforms, and how progress might be understood differently across diverse space–times. The effects of “progress-based” reforms for diverse students of color may yield insights about “progress” as a grand narrative. For instance, for Native American students during the Carlisle school era, settler educators measured “progress” if Native children assimilated into White settler culture. Comparatively, African American students in apartheid schools in urban areas in the 21st century exhibit “progress” when they perform on par with White students on standardized exams. These cases are different; yet, “progress” brings them together and reveals how Whiteness and Eurocentrism is at the center of both “progress” narratives. The school reforms for Native American and African American students were designed to “evolve” students to become like the “more advanced” White norm. Postformal method illuminates AYP and “progress” as institutional structures that maintain institutional racism and White supremacy.

Process: working the fabric of knowledge across space–times

Postformal method recognizes the insufficiency of chronos, unspooling like a ribbon, pushing people and events further away from each other. Kairos–attuned postformal researchers draw from multiple data sources across diverse space–times to work with knowledge that is folding and twisting, bringing the relationships between different people and events on opposite ends of the fabric into closer proximity with each other. Events are then linked by their quality, meaning, or significance. Such links may be located in and across empirical data, popular culture, news and media reports, social commentary, history, nature, personal reflection, and the arts. For the postformal researcher, everything is data that holds potential for analysis beyond the strict measurement techniques of positivist science. Furthermore, weighty events simultaneously impact people at various social and geographical locations in different ways. Postformal method illustrates how what happens in one location on the fabric may have a small or large ripple effect in another location.

This is akin to Einstein’s General Theory of Relativity which hypothesized that in the cosmos gravity is a relationship between space and bodies; when there is a disturbance in one area of the universe, effects are experienced elsewhere. As explained by Kincheloe, Steinberg, and Tippins (1999), he demonstrated this phenomenon by asking people to imagine a large rubber sheet and the effect that dropping a BB (small metal sphere) in the middle of the sheet would have. Since the mass of the BB is small, there might be a slight ripple in the sheet, but it would likely not disturb the sheet much. If a bowling ball were dropped in the middle of a sheet, the sheet would stretch and elongate, having a significant effect on all areas of the sheet. If there were BBs spread about on the sheet, when the bowling ball was dropped, the BBs would all roll toward
the center. Now imagine the bowling ball spinning like a planet on its axis: the sheet would twist, and the BBs would begin to rotate around the bowling ball.

If we look again at AYP, a postformal method could consider the policy itself as the bowling ball dropped in the middle of the sheet and rotating, allowing the researcher to visualize U.S. public schools and their stakeholders being pulled closer together by the gravity of the policy. However, depending on their location on the sheet, not all school communities are equally impacted. Some schools are pulled into the orbit immediately and rapidly, perhaps colliding with the policy, while other schools further away from the impact of the policy may feel barely any effects at all; yet, they are still connected. One could even assume that if the weight of the bowling ball continues to stretch, those on the outer edge of the sheet would eventually be pulled in toward the center as well. Indeed, if we slightly shift our focus to the effect of the national Common Core State Standards in combination with AYP and testing, you can see this effect as schools in more affluent areas that traditionally had stronger AYP performance were suddenly falling behind. The weight of this event brought those advantaged and disadvantaged by years of AYP closer together, enraging privileged communities alongside historically disadvantaged communities and sparking the Opt Out movement (Kornhaber, 2015). An example like this demonstrates how relationships across space-time are more obvious under extreme circumstances, but with a postformal method it doesn’t take an exceptional event to make these connections. Even mundane day-to-day activities have the opportunity to spark new awareness if the researcher keeps their eyes and ears open for resonance between different events.

**Contextualization: postformal method as research for the “right time”**

Just as Einstein’s General Theory of Relativity upended the dominance of Newtonian physics and changed modern science to open the door for quantum physics, postformal method opens up possibilities for new ways of thinking about educational research for social change. The final step necessary for generating new theory via a postformal method is contextualization. Here, we are inspired by Deloria’s (2003) words,

> In a world in which communications are nearly instantaneous and simultaneous experiences are possible, it must be spaces and places that distinguish us from one another, not time or history.  

(p. 64)

If we recognize all of humanity, the world, and time as part of a whole piece of cloth, we can begin to see patterns that traverse time and place. How people come to understand the significance of events may look and feel different based upon their proximity to the event and to each other. Through postformal theorizing, we can twist space-time to bring events, people, and places closer to each other in order to better identify commonalities and differences and
generate ways to bring about change, even if that change is fairly localized in one’s own classroom or community.

For example, earlier we identified how AYP illuminates “progress” reforms in education as mechanisms for maintaining institutional racism and White supremacy. This new awareness of “progress” as White supremacy can be applied to different contexts by raising questions about practice, such as: How as a leader am I complicit in perpetuating White supremacy/“progress” through school policies? How as a teacher am I perpetuating White supremacy/“progress” through my course content and pedagogy? How as a researcher am I upholding White supremacy/“progress” in the epistemology driving my research designs and analyses? These questions dovetail with our fifth construct of humility. No one has all the answers; no one is immune to perpetuating injustice. Postformal researchers realize that they too can be complicit in a White supremacist agenda without being conscious of their complicity. By asking questions about the manifestation of injustice through practice in various contexts, postformal researchers are compelled to act, make changes to what they do and educate others because inaction equates to being complicit in upholding White supremacy.

**Conclusion**

Postformal method moves researchers away from narratives like AYP that force separate paths of “progress” and maintain White supremacy. It reframes “progress” as the pushing and pulling of people’s lives and histories as they struggle to maintain or disrupt power, and it connects an ostensibly neutral metric like AYP to the struggle for Black Lives. Postformal method moves away from “time of” or “time that” toward “the time for” by compelling the researcher to act upon their new awareness and root out injustice across contexts. We wrote this piece in “the time of COVID”. Schools were thrust into remote learning and the manifestations of White supremacy in schooling became ever more stark. Students already disadvantaged were further disadvantaged in lockdown. Debates about whether to suspend testing began to simmer to the surface. Black and Brown students, especially those living in poverty, would feel the deleterious effects of the being out of school much more acutely than White affluent peers.

COVID time was also “the time that” anti-racist protests erupted all over the world. We watched the news and social media and wondered, “how during a pandemic do police still have ‘time for’ killing Black people?” We heard White people opine about the protests, “COVID time is not the time for that”. Yet, from the perspective of anti-racists COVID time was precisely “the time for” that. It was “the time that” the death of an unarmed Black man at the hands of police should not have happened because there is never a “right time” for that at all. COVID was the time that “essential” Black and Brown bodies worked low-wage jobs and continued to serve the affluent White population. It was the time that Black and Brown children in urban schools might not have had access to school breakfast and lunch or technology for learning. COVID was the time that a virus disproportionately killed Black people because of disparities in access to health care. Lethal White supremacy knows no lockdown. In postformal
method time twists together, illuminating the fight against injustice as always “the right time” because humanity knows no progress as long as injustice exists.

References