The Handbook of Critical Theoretical Research Methods in Education

Cheryl E. Matias

Aspiring to a sociogenic phenomenology

Publication details

https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780429056963-4

David F. LaViscount, Elizabeth K. Jeffers

Published online on: 13 May 2021

How to cite:

https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780429056963-4

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR DOCUMENT

Full terms and conditions of use: https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/legal-notices/terms

This Document PDF may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproductions, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The publisher shall not be liable for an loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.
3 Aspiring to a sociogenic phenomenology

A theoretical method in emancipatory research

David F. LaViscount and Elizabeth K. Jeffers

Introduction

Scholarship has detailed the architecture, purpose, and outcomes of education for African Americans in the United States (Watkins, 2001; Woodson, 1933/2010). It should be no surprise that graduate faculty in Western institutions of learning often provide emerging African American researchers a rubric that details the guidelines for designing and conducting research purported to produce credible Truth/truth/truths. We conceptualize this rubric as a coordinating system of codified and uncodified dispositions, expectations, and approaches that align with white academia and barricade emancipatory research. The rubric, if applied according to its guidelines, is purported to have a universal capacity for application regardless of local context, history, or peoples. It is informed by what anti-colonial scholar, Sylvia Wynter (2003) referred to as “the ethnoclass (i.e. Western bourgeois) conception of the human, Man, which overrepresents itself as if it were the human itself” (p. 260). This rubric, or what Wynter refers to as a “lawlike order of knowledge” (King, 2005, p. 361), is set into the schema of emerging researchers, creating a fixed approach for what constitutes quality research and knowledge regardless of socio-cultural (Fanon, 1952/1967) reality. Emerging African American researchers are often impelled to accept this rubric that implicitly denies our [their] own experiences, in part, because of what W. E. B. Du Bois (1903/2017), recognized by some scholars as the founder of modern sociology (Morris, 2015), described as double consciousness. Du Bois explained that this is an African American experience of “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. 9). That is, double consciousness describes how African Americans experience the world with a pervasive experience of “looking at one’s self through the eyes of others” (p. 9). One of its features is an implicit hierarchical organization by race as it relates to being fully human – African Americans’ voices are suppressed because we [they] are relegated to the bottom of this hierarchy (Wynter, 2003). Indeed, Freire (1970/2017) highlighted this behavior (simple transfer of information from teacher to student) and referred to it as the banking model – information, masquerading as all-inclusive knowledge, is etched into the students’ schema.
As such, we propose (re)creating and (re)imagining research training so that researchers might work with and respond to our [their] communities.

In considering how doctoral students’ training might extend beyond this rubric, we draw upon: (1) Frantz Fanon’s (1952/1967) sociogeny and Sylvia Wynter’s (2001) sociogenic principle, or the governing code of our present culture’s mode of subjective understanding (Wynter, 1995); (2) the African American scholarly tradition (Du Bois, 1903/2017; Harding, 1974); and (3) hermeneutic phenomenology (Heidegger, 1962/2010). “The education of any people should begin with the people themselves, but Negroes thus trained have been dreaming about the ancients of Europe and about those who have tried to imitate them,” wrote Carter G. Woodson (1933, p. 31). The rubric continually prohibits researchers from proceeding “with the people themselves,” however. As such, we inquire: How might sociogenic phenomenological theory (SP) disrupt the limitations placed on African American doctoral students’ work and ability to advocate for [with] our [their] communities, while also informing the development of new curriculum that supports students’ engagement in emancipatory research?

Part I: theoretical lineage of sociogenic phenomenology

Sociogeny and the sociogenic principle

Fanon (1952/1967), a Martinican psychiatrist and revolutionary philosopher, wrote, “Besides ontogeny and phylogeny stands sociogeny” (p. 11), to signify an ontological (pertaining to the nature of reality) shift from a reality conceptualized as exclusively biological to one in which the human species operates according to an existential conception of what it is like to be human coded into our consciousness. In contrast to the genomic principle, which defines life in strictly biological terms, Wynter (2001) developed the sociogenic principle. Building on Fanon’s sociogeny and Du Bois’s (1903/2017) double consciousness, the sociogenic principle offers insight into the governing codes over our subjective experiences, or the “interrelated phenomenon of identity, mind, and/or consciousness” (Wynter, 2003, p. 32). Wynter highlighted the significance of this shift: “humaness is no longer a noun. Being human is a praxis” (Wynter & McKittrick, 2015, p. 23). Hence, this ontological shift precedes and underpins the redefined way of knowing reality in this new tradition of phenomenology – sociogenic phenomenology.

In her conversation with Katherine McKittrick (2015), Wynter illuminates how the rubric transcends criticism and examination in such a way that Black people of the colonized world operate within an “order of consciousness” that impels us [them] to “desire against [oneself] but also to work against the emancipatory interest of the world-systemic subordinated and inferiorized Negro population to which [they] belong” (p. 49). That is, Black people, living a double consciousness experience, do not necessarily work in our [their] own interest – particularly without the critical awakening, confrontation, and unravelling of double consciousness necessary for dismantling the systems,
institutions, and ideas that have relegated Black people to an inferior status. Undergirded by a “sociosystemic organizing process” (Wynter, 1995, p. 45) where Black is placed at the bottom of the hierarchy (Wynter, 2003), educational institutions enforce the rubric through hegemonic discourses and curriculum. As such, we note that the embodiment of the “ethnoclass ‘Man’” is often valorized through who instructs research courses and supervises dissertation research. As Causey-Konaté (2018) wrote:

[M]y scholarship was apparently being held to reflect universality and political neutrality. . . . My own ideas and understandings about what constitute scholarship and the purposes that scholarship is meant to achieve were inconsistent with those underpinning the policy-based decision that resulted in the invalidation of my graduate faculty status.

(p. 39)

Educational institutions have a propensity for silencing African American scholars’ voices, which effectively diminishes the emancipatory potential of research.

**Phenomenological research**

SP, in part, developed out of a gap in methodological literature. Discourse on phenomenological research often centers on two branches of the tradition: (1) transcendental phenomenology (Husserl, 1931/1970) and (2) hermeneutic phenomenology (Heidegger, 1962/2010). Before explaining SP and sociogenic phenomenological method (SPM), it is important to understand transcendental (descriptive) and hermeneutic phenomenology. Doctoral students, depending on the training and epistemological (how reality is known) orientation of their advising faculty, may, intentionally or not, integrate a fixed understanding of quality phenomenological research design into their schema. For instance, a doctoral program may introduce students to a rubric for conducting [transcendental] phenomenology and label this variant as phenomenology. Within the colonized world, rigid conceptions of being are characterized by an interconnected value system comprised of, among other elements, the purity of objectivity and singular Truth. These values, representing a particular epistemology (inconsistent with emancipatory research), are closely aligned with the transcendental phenomenological approach, which does not account for its own bias.

As such, Husserl (1970) argued that one could suspend prior knowledge and assumptions in order to perceive the essence of a phenomenon. Through phenomenology, or “the sciences of the natural standpoint” (Husserl, p. 106), one could bracket their experiences through a detached consciousness. Yet, this detached consciousness, or pure reflection, is particularly problematic for African American doctoral students. The “ethno-class ‘Man’” (Wynter, 2001) often directs minoritized students to “bracket” their “biases.” Hycner’s (1985) “guidelines for the phenomenological analysis of interview data” is an example
of this hegemonic epistemology. It provides a step-by-step guide for conducting phenomenological analysis, including concepts such as bracketing and peer debriefing, without an explanation of epistemological position or delineation between different traditions. While these guidelines might be helpful for doctoral student training, the omission of the term transcendental and this particular tradition’s situation pari passu hermeneutic is an indication of hegemonic epistemology. This lack of distinction normalizes whiteness and is eminent of white logic,

a context in which White supremacy has defined the techniques and processes of reasoning about social facts . . . [and it] assumes a historical posture that grants eternal objectivity to the views of elite Whites and condemns the views of non-Whites to perpetual subjectivity.

(Zuberi & Bonilla-Silva, 2008, p. 17)

Guidelines such as these, aligned with the rubric, severely limit humanizing qualities needed for conducting emancipatory research.

While Husserl’s student Martin Heidegger (1962/2010 argued that phenomenology (Hegel, 1807/1977; Kant, 1781/2004) was built upon ancient ontology (as in the nature of reality and the human being in the world), thus, his work sought to destroy imposed categories as well as their restrictions. “[T]his hardened tradition must be loosened up, and the concealments which it has brought about must be resolved. . . . We are to destroy the traditional content of ancient ontology,” wrote Heidegger (p. 44). Yet, what was absent from Heidegger’s destruction of ancient ontology is what is central for SP, and that is the lived experience of antiblackness and colonization, which Du Bois (2017/1903) addressed as “the Negro Problem” (Warren, 2018).

In our application of phenomenology, we found a need to articulate how the colonial context and the historico-racial world impacts research, lest we recycle dominant orientation. We challenge what Wynter referred to as the “lawlike order of knowledge” (King, 2005, p. 361) that induces novice, marginalized researchers, and particularly African American researchers, to believe that our [their] positionalities, and hence our [their] emotions, perceptions, and cognition, are limitations. As doctoral student Ingrid Alvarado-Nichols stated to her committee during her dissertation defense, “being a Latina woman, and woman of color, is a strength of my research rather than a limitation.” Further, we add that Ingrid’s positionality enabled her to experience and learn about phenomena in ways that as Elizabeth noted to her colleagues, “we as white faculty members cannot” (Jeffers, personal communication, January 24, 2019), and also in ways that might work toward healing and redressing systemic injustice.

**African American scholarly tradition**

Simultaneously, SP builds upon the African American scholarly tradition. The late African American interdisciplinary scholar and historian, Vincent Harding
(1974), acknowledged, “we do not exist in splendid isolation from the situation of the larger black community” (p. 5). As such, we believe that educational researchers have a moral imperative (King, 2017) to develop and implement “new ways of looking into the reality of others that open our own lives to view – and that makes us accountable to the people whom we study and their interests and needs” (Dillard, 2000, p. 662). This imperative aligns with research on African American school leadership (Dantley, 2002; Lomotey, 1993; Tillman, 2004). For instance, Tillman’s findings on African American principals highlights engagement in school leadership as less of a career, and more as a vocation characterized by great personal sacrifice rooted in the moral imperative of wholly educating African American students. Oftentimes, however, findings such as these and discussions on race and racism are absent from school leadership curriculum (Davis, Gooden, & Micheaux, 2015; Gooden, 2012). The universality of this rubric, indeed, precludes essential dialogue on race in education, a necessity for healing in African American communities.

**Sociogenic phenomenology (SP)**

SP aims to disrupt oppression, and “the lawlike order of knowledge” (King, 2005, p. 361). While hermeneutic phenomenology names historical orientation and contextualization as principles of its application (Lopez & Willis, 2004), it fails to address Wynter’s (2003) conception of the “ethnoclass ‘Man’” and the liminal Other, or sub-human. Methods that fail to name this overrepresentation risk omitting how power has historically silenced certain voices, particularly those of African American students and scholars (Rabaka, 2010). Or, as Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva (2008) so poignantly argue, renders research with white logic, white methods. It is important to note that SP does not require an absolute rejection of findings generated from positivist/positivist-adjacent research; rather, it rejects the idea that findings represent a singular, objective Truth. The sociogenic phenomenological method (SPM) allows for the consideration of such findings pari passu the findings of other approaches.

Just as important, SP is a departure from critical hermeneutics (Brenkman, 1987; Lopez & Willis, 2004) and critical phenomenology (Desjarlais, 1997). Critical traditions share the aim of disrupting oppression, yet they lack an explicit feature necessary in the colonized world – the treatment of experience in a way that confronts how the colonized world distorts identities and imposes “traumatic psychic burden” (Newkirk II, 2017, p. xiv), such as double consciousness, in order to sustain systemic oppression. Situated within the emancipatory research tradition, SP contributes to the unravelling of double consciousness.

Unlike other phenomenological traditions that simply examine lived experience and the structures of consciousness through the long interview (Moustakas, 1994), SPM considers data holistically. Meaning, SPM is not simply based on a long interview transcript used for data analysis. Rather, it better captures racial realities as the lived experiences of the colonized cannot be completely
reduced through traditional data gathering methods. Data, under SPM, is something to be experienced, researched, and learned through community dialogue and self-investigation of consciousness – all of which expand beyond the degree to which the richness of lived experience can be captured in simple interview transcriptions. For example, Fanon (1952/1967) explored the psyche of the colonized Negro man not by conducting long interviews with participants but by investigating the larger systemic racism embedded in the colonization of Martinique. He drew upon his feelings as a Black man to deeply explore the psyches that may justify interracial coupling and facilitate the internalization of racism in Black minds. He connected the colonized racist world to those who are most impacted by the historic-racial context. We mark this as a departure from a history of research that has often exclusively benefitted the researcher – sociogeny is more than an individual problem.

Part II: application procedures of sociogenic phenomenology methods for educational leadership

Engaging in SPM requires an understanding that this method is underpinned by a particular ontological perspective, an epistemological position, and an approach to research design with defined tenets. Though SPM defines specific emancipatory tenets for conducting research, it is not a prescriptive, step-by-step tool for data collection and analysis. Rather, it is an approach that informs any study’s design. An introduction to SPM’s tenets is needed before deciding on other design measures. Five tenets encapsulate the ontological and epistemological positions in a way that operationalizes the dynamics for emancipatory research methods:

1. Culturally Affirming Co-Design,
2. Sociogenic Investigation,
3. Healing for Liberation,
4. Trustworthiness through SPM, and
5. Researcher Identity, Contextuality, and Voice.

The design of research in this tradition requires thoughtful construction underpinned by these tenets. The “counterstories, and different ways of viewing the world” that Tyson (2003, p. 22) noted of emancipatory research are features of SPM and are embedded in the following examples.

Emancipatory tenets of sociogenic phenomenology

Tenet 1: culturally affirming co-design

The culturally affirming co-design tenet is based on repositioning of power between “the researcher” and “the researched.” This re-positioning has implications
Aspiring to a sociogenic phenomenology

for the entire inquiry from the formulation of the research question to the reporting of findings.

Academic research most often begins with a research question formulated by a researcher; followed by a review of literature that the researcher finds relevant; the design of data collection/analysis procedures, including subject/participant selection; and finally, the reporting of findings. This design process, typical in Western research, is developed from a framework acquired in doctoral training, labelled as “good research.” Dillard’s (2000) characterization of this approach as a “recipe” (p. 663) or, in this case rubric, and the researcher’s ostensible detachment from the researched is what we believe is incongruent with emancipatory research. This “recipe” positions the researcher as the liberator and the researched as a people unable to take a leading role in their own emancipation. SPM begins by developing the research question with community. This dismantles the former power dynamic (i.e. the researcher and the researched) and diminishes the possibility that a study will be detached from community needs.

Traditional linear research designs as described previously are incongruent with emancipatory research. The culturally affirming co-design tenet requires a researcher to begin with community. The SPM researcher has built reciprocal relationships (Patel, 2016) to better understand the social-cultural realities within this community and to contribute to existing community-based work. In this stage of the design process, the researcher(s) and community members (or co-researchers) should remain within the phenomenological tradition, centering perceived experiences in an effort to gain insight into the multiple ways of being and knowing experienced by oppressed people of the colonized world, particularly the descendants of enslaved.

University researchers will typically begin culturally affirming co-design from an imposed subfield/discipline. We consider educational leadership as an example subfield. The SPM researcher will convene a Socratic dialogue of multiple stakeholders centered around an essential emancipatory question (EEQ). For instance, an EEQ may be, “What are the important issues within our community?” The dialogue is paramount for not only culturally affirming co-design, but also for liberation through sociogenic investigation (tenet 2) and healing (tenet 3). Dialogue is an avenue that may lead to deeper explorations and the co-development of an SPM research question that is more likely to be meaningful to that community. For instance, a community within educational leadership could be considered African American doctoral students being trained in an educational policy program and local African American K–12 stakeholders. This particular community, through dialogue (stemming from the EEQ), reading, and other forms of initial discovery, may conclude that there is a need to explore the experiences of African American K–12 teachers during the initial implementation of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995), or CRP. With the SPM framework of tenets remaining in the forefront, this community begins the co-design process. Without Socratic dialogue stemming from culturally affirming co-design, researchers are unlikely to address
the community’s central concerns. Researchers working outside of SPM may pursue queries that bring harm to the community’s priorities.

**Tenet 2: sociogenic investigation**

Marvelous discoveries occur at the equally marvelous contact of inner and outer totality perceived imaginatively and conjointly by, or more precisely within, the poet.

(Césaire, 1982/1999, p. lv)

Martinican poet, politician, and teacher/mentor of Fanon, Aimé Césaire, theorized that “poetic knowledge” (p. xlii) reveals a part of the human that natural science cannot, necessitating both forms of knowledge in order to uncover truth(s) (i.e. “marvelous discovers”) about *what it means to be human*. This proposition, as quoted earlier, details a moment when the poet develops an awareness of a more complete reality, comprising the “inner and outer.” Transformation, clarity, and full humanity in relation to consciousness lie at the core of his proposition, which also characterizes the aim of sociogenic investigation – though we do not consider poetic knowledge to be exclusively found/formed through conventional poetry. Poetic knowledge is producible through various expressions and is a point of reference as we consider what incorporating sociogenic investigation means, entails, and delivers.

An essential aspect of SPM, which distinguishes it from other genres of phenomenological research, is the treatment given to consciousness as an aspect of being that retains harmful contingencies originating from socialization and subjugation vis-à-vis the “status-ordered hierarchically structured, world-systemic order of domination/subordination” (Wynter & McKittrick, 2015, p. 4). In other words, the sociogenic experience of oppressed groups of the colonized world is a pervasive experience that operates below the surface of consciousness, and it is necessary to maintain the imposed superior and inferior roles of dominant and subordinate groups, respectively. As Wynter explained, white “is a cultural conception that is only possible as an opiate-triggering reward conception by means of the degradation of the ‘Black’” (King, 2005, p. 363). Above all, SPM enables one to better understand how we have been historically and culturally socialized under this sociogenic governing code.

In the effort to deploy emancipatory research that produces substantive benefits in African American communities, an SP researcher must investigate their own sociogenic experience for a more vivid perception of one’s own lived experience and an unravelling of double consciousness. This type of self-reflection is indeed a form of redressing harm perpetuated against African Americans. In fact, in discussing leadership preparation, Gooden and Dantley (2012) noted that “self-reflection is important to addressing issues of institutional racism” (p. 249). While sociogenic investigation is indeed about self-reflection, it is unique in that it only applies to colonized individuals. There are
significant benefits in self-reflection, but an individual risks failing to unravel double consciousness if they engage in self-reflection without an orientation toward the sociogenic principle because such a principle accounts for the colonial condition of Black people.

Hence, we explore how sociogenic investigation might be utilized in our example from the previous section on CRP curriculum. Following the initial discovery session(s) in community with the African American doctoral students and K-12 stakeholders, the SPM researcher, whose role is to facilitate the co-design and co-implementation of the project, may propose a series of sessions that include a variety of exercises aimed at sociogenic investigation. While remaining open to community members or co-researchers’ suggestions of other forms of sociogenic investigation, the researcher might access poetic knowledge through poetry writing and reading, dialogue with guiding questions, and written reflection. Researchers who are not aligned with SPM and are beholden to the rubric, miss the truth(s) in the form of “poetic knowledge” that emerge from sociogenic investigation.

The following image from David’s dissertation provides another example of sociogenic investigation. This exercise began as a self-affirmation activity about a young woman’s experiences as an African American student and mentee. The study provides school leaders and non-school based mentoring programs insight into designing mentoring programs for African American adolescents. The student instinctively turned the writing exercise into a poem, which ends with what we consider the beginnings of the confrontation and unravelling of the double consciousness burden – the transformation and clarity in relation to consciousness emerge at the end, demonstrating, in practice, “poetic knowledge.”

**Tenet 3: healing for liberation**

SPM moves toward liberation for African American communities. This tenet is deployed, in concert with its two adjoining tenets, as a means of addressing “traumatic psychic burden,” such as double consciousness (Du Bois, 1903/2017). Equally important, *healing for liberation* is a point of departure from the long history of exploitation within African American communities.

Understanding the necessity of *healing for liberation* is to comprehend the relationship between African American double consciousness and the sociogenic code via phenomenology as a research tradition that, broadly speaking, focuses on the perception of experiences and the composition of consciousness (Heidegger, 1962/2010). Undisrupted, the burden of double consciousness, “the overrepresentation of the ethno-class Man” (Wynter, 2001), and their inherent anti-Black features are harmful to African Americans. An effort to understand the African American experience without healing threatens SPM’s emancipatory aims.

*Healing for liberation* may be incorporated in a variety of forms. As stated earlier, the SPM conception of data expands beyond the long interview of phenomenological tradition (Moustakas, 1994). Instead of simply conducting long
Appendix B

Post-Interview Self-Affirmation Exercise

What are your most important personal values? Write as much as you can about your personal values. Some examples of personal values are: (1) being a good artist, (2) athleticism, (3) writing, (4) reader, (5) membership in a group, and others. You are not limited to this short list.

There are many personal values.

My most important values would be being a great writer. When I write I can express myself with words on paper that I cannot say verbally. I can change what I say if I feel as if it is offensive. I can hide behind the pen. I can hide behind a pseudonym. And it's not about hiding as if I want to offend people but what I have to dig deep into real issues, I have to address the problems of people, and the world without the fear of retaliation. Like I'm just human when I write. I'm not a 17 year old black girl. I'm just human.

interviews, SPM focuses on data that is lived, felt, understood, and is historically and racially connected. It is necessary to move beyond traditional rubric methods, like interviews, to fully engage in SPM because how does one heal if they cannot fully investigate the larger socio-racial dynamic that influences their lived experiences? Furthermore, how does the truth(s), perceived through consciousness, come to bear if the African American community never engages in healing from double consciousness? Clearly, naming that which oppresses African American people (i.e. racism, colonization, white supremacy) are necessary steps to understanding the stories, counterstories, and realities that African Americans experience. Or, more poignantly put, researchers who apply SPM must fully recognize the trauma in order to begin a path towards healing.
Aspiring to a sociogenic phenomenology

So, how does healing for liberation manifest in SPM? Healing pervades SPM design. For instance, consider how measures that include culturally affirming co-design and sociogenic investigation overlap with healing. Let us revisit the example from the previous section that considered the subfield of educational leadership. Healing begins concomitantly with the initiation of the culturally affirming co-design process. Along with serving as an opportunity to authentically co-construct research designed for relevant, substantive impacts in African American communities, culturally affirming co-design represents a redressing of and healing from a history of exploitative research practices, such as the Tuskegee Study of Untreated Syphilis in the Negro Male (Jones, 1993). Similarly, healing within educational leadership is about redressing the history of dehumanizing “educational science” that makes correlations between IQ and race (Terman, 1916) and the “culture of poverty” narrative (Payne, 2005). Sociogenic investigation offers healing from this harm through poetic writing and other forms of sociogenic investigation that generate humanizing “poetic knowledge.”

**Tenet 4: trustworthiness through SPM**

SPM is incongruent with positivism and positivism-adjacent epistemologies that state that trustworthy research claims are derived from the scientific method and that singular, objective Truth is desirable and/or even attainable. Achieving trustworthiness in SPM is tightly bound to its epistemological and ontological positions. The standard measurements of trustworthiness (e.g. triangulation) in qualitative research programs in the United States have been defined largely by Lincoln and Guba (1985). These measures seek to obtain proximity to “objectivity,” which is epistemologically inconsistent with SPM, in a similar way that these measures are inconsistent with hermeneutic phenomenology (LaViscount, 2019). For instance, Lincoln and Guba state that in conducting peer debriefing, a researcher “exposes oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytic session and for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain implicit within the inquirer’s mind” (p. 308). Lincoln and Guba go on to state that this “process helps to keep the inquirer ‘honest’” (p. 308). The implicit objectives in these measures conflict with the goal of SPM. As methodological traditions provide guidelines for conducting research, these guidelines contain an inextricable, but often tacit, epistemological position with disregard for those who experience double consciousness. In other words, the procedures of these traditions allow (and disallow) for particular ways of knowing as the procedures produce claims that imply a certain statement about what types of truth(s) claims are valid. For a researcher working outside of SPM, establishing trustworthiness in our educational leadership example would perhaps require triangulation through document analysis of the CRP curriculum map in order to substantiate the teachers’ experiences. The lawlike rubric takes issue with the lack of “objectivity” approaches, such as triangulation and other white methods, or...
the “tools used to manufacture empirical data and analysis to support the racial stratification in society” (Zuberi & Bonilla-Silva, 2008, p. 18). Trustworthiness of findings within SPM is verified by the community.

**Tenet 5: researcher identity, contextuality, and voice**

Researcher identity and their relationship to the community in which they conduct research are of utmost concern. While it is harmful to make claims that suggest that any particular identity group is monolithic in beliefs and experiences, equally harmful is to assume there is no historical impact of research in and on oppressed communities (Smith, 1999/2012; Tuck, 2009). Distrust of research in African American communities are deeply connected to instances of mendacity and maltreatment of African Americans through research. Indeed, an African American researcher’s personal experiences with double consciousness allows them to more accurately interpret (and in ways that may resonate more with African American communities) information pertaining to African American experiences. While a white researcher may understand double consciousness in an intellectual regard, he or she cannot understand it through their [our] lived experiences. However, inasmuch as African American researchers may have personal experiences that sheds light onto the collective Black experience, there must also exist a critical understanding of how those experiences are framed within a larger context of race, white supremacy, and colonization rather than a disposition that presumes meritocracy, colorblindness, or free market ideology.

**Part III: implications of SPM in educational leadership**

Instead of pushing students’ cultural identities, communities, ways of knowing and existing into liminal and muted spaces, we (re)imagine a curriculum in educational leadership where African American scholars are able to draw upon their “fully realized autonomy of feelings, thoughts, and behaviors” (Wynter, 2003, p. 321). Without the SPM approach, it is inconceivable that African American scholars in educational leadership would be able to contribute to the moral imperative of wholly educating African American students under a rubric that requires us [them] to cage aspects of our [their] humanity. We advocate for a curriculum that integrates SPM and its tenets because without it, research will continue to fail at unearthing truth(s) only accessible through the full humanity of African Americans. We assert that these truth(s) reflect ways of knowing and being that may inform educational theory, policy, and practice – moving toward the moral imperative and actualization of Harding’s (1974) call for Black scholarship as a vocation.

African American faculty who demonstrate a critical perspective toward the rubric are vital to supporting the development of SPM researchers within this vocation. Additionally, they are vital because educational leadership training is in dire need of discourses on leadership and research design that include race matters. It is essential to understand that the experiences of African American
scholars are a strength through which insights can be drawn in pushing forward the momentum of liberation.

**Conclusion**

Academic research is broadly understood to have the aim of improving the world through the broadening of knowledge, uncovering the ills of the world through critical investigation, and informing practice across a multitude of fields. These visions are greatly unfulfilled within oppressed, and particularly African American communities. Academic research has a history of causing harm in this community. We assert that redressing these shortcomings will require transformative approaches that support doctoral students as they work toward new paradigms through new methods (Jeffers & Fournillier, in press), such as SPM. SPM builds upon our [their] identities and relationships, which we believe are necessary for uplifting our [their] communities. Indeed, SPM aims to shift the discipline of educational leadership through altering research training so that it functions in response to and alongside one’s community. While we have both challenged the rubric, albeit in our different roles and relationships to power, we know that David’s questioning of the rubric through his dissertation and through his design of SPM is where the courage lies. His experiences with double consciousness, as well as our theoretically informed (Wynter, 2001, 2003) navigation of the order, pushes us to work towards a more humanizing approach to educational research. If we, as critical researchers, continue to turn a blind eye to the beauties that African American researchers bring to educational research then we are no better than the racists who denied our [their] emancipation over 200 years ago. Time to recognize.

**References**


Aspiring to a sociogenic phenomenology

Wynter, S. (2001). Towards the sociogenic principle: Fanon, identity, the puzzle of conscious experience, and what it is like to be “black”. In M. F. Duran-Cogan & A. Gomez-Moriana (Eds.), *National identities and sociopolitical changes in Latin America* (pp. 30–66). New York, NY: Routledge.