

9-1-2010

# Disciplined (un)Knowing: The Pedagogical Possibilities of Yogic Research as Praxis

Sarah K. MacKenzie

*Bucknell University*, [sarah.mackenzie@bucknell.edu](mailto:sarah.mackenzie@bucknell.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr>

 Part of the [Quantitative, Qualitative, Comparative, and Historical Methodologies Commons](#), and the [Social Statistics Commons](#)

---

## Recommended APA Citation

MacKenzie, S. K. (2010). Disciplined (un)Knowing: The Pedagogical Possibilities of Yogic Research as Praxis. *The Qualitative Report*, 15(5), 1124-1144. Retrieved from <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol15/iss5/6>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the The Qualitative Report at NSUWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Qualitative Report by an authorized administrator of NSUWorks. For more information, please contact [nsuworks@nova.edu](mailto:nsuworks@nova.edu).

---

A promotional banner for the Qualitative Research Graduate Certificate at Nova Southeastern University. The banner has a dark blue background on the left with the NSU logo and text: "Qualitative Research Graduate Certificate", "Indulge in Culture", "Exclusively Online • 18 Credits", and a "LEARN MORE" button. On the right, there is a photograph of six diverse people sitting on a stone ledge in front of a building with "NOVA SOUTHEASTERN" visible on the wall.

**Qualitative Research Graduate Certificate**  
*Indulge in Culture*  
Exclusively Online • 18 Credits  
**LEARN MORE**

NSU  
NOVA SOUTHEASTERN  
UNIVERSITY

NOVA SOUTHEASTERN

## Disciplined (un)Knowing: The Pedagogical Possibilities of Yogic Research as Praxis

### **Abstract**

Within this paper, I seek to engage with the possibilities that may exist when, through a yogic lens, we disrupt those unspoken, but accepted boundaries with/in research and pedagogy that separate art and science, reader and author, student and teacher, knowing and not knowing. Using multiple genres, I explore the practice of researching and the limitations of Truth seeking to create space for dialogue across the text, as reader and writer consider the pedagogical possibilities of letting go within research. In a culture that places a premium on knowing, this work can be uncomfortable, but in the discomfort one may discover new ways of knowing and seeing that invite praxis within pedagogy.

### **Keywords**

Yoga, Arts-Informed Research, Pedagogy, Praxis, Poststructuralism

### **Creative Commons License**



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 4.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

## **Disciplined (Un)Knowing: The Pedagogical Possibilities of Yogic Research as Praxis**

Sarah K. MacKenzie  
Bucknell University, Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, USA

---

*Within this paper, I seek to engage with the possibilities that may exist when, through a yogic lens, we disrupt those unspoken, but accepted boundaries with/in research and pedagogy that separate art and science, reader and author, student and teacher, knowing and not knowing. Using multiple genres, I explore the practice of researching and the limitations of Truth seeking to create space for dialogue across the text, as reader and writer consider the pedagogical possibilities of letting go within research. In a culture that places a premium on knowing, this work can be uncomfortable, but in the discomfort one may discover new ways of knowing and seeing that invite praxis within pedagogy. Key Words: Yoga, Arts-Informed Research, Pedagogy, Praxis, and Poststructuralism*

---

### **Introduction**

A scientist sets out to conquer nature through knowledge—external nature, external knowledge. By these means he may split the atom and achieve external power. A yogi sets out to explore his own internal nature, to penetrate the atom (*atma*) of being. He does not gain dominion over wide lands and restless seas, but over his own recalcitrant flesh and febrile mind. This is the power of compassionate truth. (Iyengar, 2005, p. 19)

### **Movements Toward Qualitative (Un)knowing**

Qualitative research is by nature multifaceted and dynamic, made up of numerous theories and methodologies that can offer strong lenses through which to make sense of experience. Ask for a definition of qualitative research, and you find yourself bombarded with “a complex, interconnected family of terms, concepts, and assumptions that surround the term” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 2). These terms, representing the voices of both theory and methodology, often contradict one another in relationship to questions of purpose and practice, as well as representation and validity. However, we have entered “... the 7th moment of qualitative inquiry, a post-experimental phase, performing culture as we write it” (Denzin, 2003, p. ix). These post-experimental forms of qualitative inquiry that call on one to enter into the dialogic process of meaning-making, disrupt the discourse, thus, creating instability and a sense of (dis)comfort. Yet, we have been programmed to seek answers within our research work, answers that explain rather than initiate experience. Eisner (1997) remarks, “Knowledge as a process, a temporary state, is scary to many” (p. 7). It is within the fear that we have the opportunity to make a choice, that is, to cling to the hegemony of the answer or to let go and become present to those thoughts, emotions, and senses that may envelop us in the experience. This act of

letting go of Truth, becoming present to the moment is difficult for many researchers as we have been trained to find answers, to make generalizations that will hopefully in turn advance society. Our disciplines are many; however our desire to make a positive difference in the world is most often shared. How can this difference be made when there is nothing absolute to claim?

### **Beginning to think yogically.**

As a young college student, I found myself drawn to the practice of yoga – that which blends, body, mind, and spiritual practice. Little did I know that years later this practice would not only open up doors in my daily life, but would also invite a new way of being with my art, research, and teaching. To make sense of the rooted nature of this practice, I draw on BKS Iyengar’s (1976) description, starting from the name of the practice: “The word yoga is derived from the Sanskrit root yuj, meaning to bind, join, attach, and yoke, to direct one’s attention on, to use, and apply. It also means communion” (p. 19). It is this yogic practice that reminds me to re/turn to the moment, to move outside myself, becoming present and connected to all that is around me. This is a discipline I admit, with which I struggle to be present, grounded through each word or movement across the day. Often I find my mind swirling with thoughts, seeking the recognition of my own mythological (Freire, 2005) truths. When this happens, I try to stop, to return to the breath – so that I might re-connect with that which exists outside my/self and that which connects me to Earth and other. Breathing I am present, I begin to hear the echo of my own monologue, clouded with the subjective assumptions of my own positioning with/in time and space, coloring the crevices of my pedagogical practice. It is from this position that I begin to further explore the pedagogical possibilities, within both teaching and research, of yogic practice.

### **Relational possibilities through text.**

Like yoga, I consider research pedagogy to be a spiritual (Wilson, 2004) practice of movement and performance. I attend to Denzin’s (2003) examination of Langellier’s work, noting that “performances are the sites where context, agency, praxis, history, and subjectivity intersect” (p. 16). Each word, action, re-action, and thought is part of the living performance of self across the context of culture. I consider this textual space to be performative in that my words are embodied, intertwining with inscriptions from the past, shaping my perceptions of an experience of inquiry across the un/known (Denzin). These intersections vary in genre as a means to invite disruption and (re)interpretation, by you the *reader/writer* (Barthes, 1977) of my (own) processes of inquiry into methodological practices and ideologies within researching. Each space, word, movement I make across the page exists temporally – I invite the disruption by you, by other, so that we might become part of a performative dialogue. A sharing that is out in the open, where we are, as Wilson suggests, “Living, as it were, not at a distance, but face to face and engaged” (p. 44). Waldro, as cited in Fels (2004) notes that in claiming it is “through these interactions . . . that we might move into ‘a dynamic generative space of possibilities unfold(ing) in an endless dance of co-emergence’” (p. 76).

Within the textual and performative space of this rendering of researching the un/known within a living process of meaning-making, I seek to open spaces, moments of collective pause where across our positions as artists, researchers, writers, and readers we may disrupt the text with the *graffiti* (Grumet, 1988) of our (own) experiences, to (re)acquaint ourselves with new and multiple possibilities. But what does this mean, to be positioned with/in a collective pause? Why would this be of any value, where it is through research many have long sought answers and solutions (Bernstein, 1976)?

### **Questions of knowing in a space of ambiguity.**

Knowledge has long been the treasure at the end of the researching quest. Through knowledge, positivists tell us, we are able to make improvements in place, people, and understanding. We are told, as qualitative researchers, that “once we achieve empirical theories ... , [there] will no longer be any serious question about the scientific status of social disciplines, and it will be clearly seen that form and success of explanations differ in degree only from the natural sciences ...” (Bernstein, 1976, p. 24). This acceptance of positivism is tempting, it is easy to become comfortable and complacent as we find ourselves protected, kept cool within the shadows of a defined knowledge that can grow around us. Is there pedagogical value when we disrupt more complacent and concrete epistemologies by engaging, in active presence, with/in those echoes of an (un)known ambiguity of being?

## **Yoga and Research as Discipline**

### **The Yamas and Niyamas**

We often imagine yoga, from a western perspective as a series of postures (*asanas*) that will lead us toward the development of strong, flexible bodies. While this physical practice, *hatha* yoga, often serves as a beginning, it is simply one aspect of a practice that helps one find a way of being in the world that unites self with other, body with mind. In fact, as Iyengar (2005) remarks when discussing the nature of yoga, “Its goal is nothing less than to attain the integrity of oneness-oneness with ourselves and as a consequence oneness with all that lies beyond ourselves” (p. xiv). Like all practices, there are rules and ethics within yoga that have been developed to shape our actions, moving us forward in a compassionate way. These ethics that I am referring to are called the *yamas* and *niyamas*. The *yamas*: nonviolence (*ahimsa*), truthfulness (*satya*), non-stealing (*asteya*), celibacy (*bramacharya*), and modesty of life (*aparigraha*), clarify the way one must conduct the self in relationship to others. The *niyamas*: cleanliness (*sauca*), contentment (*santosa*), sustained practice (*tapas*), self study (*svadhyana*), and humble surrender to God (*Isvara pranidhana*), identify those practices of inward being that influence the way one interacts with the world (Iyengar, 2005).

### **Aparigraha and Satya**

Both the *yamas* and the *niyamas* have implications when we consider them in relationship to research practice and methodology. However, for the purpose of this

paper I will focus on the yamas of satya (truthfulness) and aparigraha (modesty of life). Iyengar (2005) remarks that Truth is *absolute*, it “is the soul communicating with conscience” (p. 251). Satya is conscious and absolute Truth; however, if we examine this through the practice of aparigraha we must be humble, letting go of our own attachments to truth. Thus through the practice of satya and aparigraha, we begin to recognize that absolute Truth is only possible when we let go of our attachments to individual truths, becoming compassionate in relationship to the truths of an other, recognizing that knowing is temporal, truth relative. It is these two ethical practices that have the potential to change the way we look at research, both in terms of the purpose of research as well as the ways in which we interpret our data.

### **Aligning Practice**

As I consider the disciplines of satya and aparigraha, as they might relate to the work of researching and teaching, I would like to for a moment return to a basic definition of qualitative research, as offered Denzin and Lincoln (2000). Qualitative research is:

a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (p. 3)

Research and teaching might easily be considered practices mirroring those of yoga. Through our practice we learn the postures/methods and become present to ourselves and the world around us. We move in response, re-adjusting our bodies and minds as the elements of the moment re-position us. We become limber and re-livened when we do not push ourselves into those poses and ideas that we might no longer be able to do in this moment. Yoga is a practice of love and courage; education, and as such I would like to note research, is as Freire (2005) comments, “an act of love, and thus an act of courage. It cannot fear analysis of reality or, under pain of revealing itself as a farce, avoid creative discussion” (p. 38). Meaning remains static if we are isolated in the act of claiming without willingness to be present, listening as we enter into a reflexive discussion with another. Through satya and aparigraha, we are able to release our attachments to singular moments of knowing, offering opportunity for more engaged conversations of temporality as opposed to reality. By acknowledging and letting go of attachment, one is freed from the burden of the known – able to move to new settings or levels of awareness, somehow knowing that upon no level will one remain for long (Prabhupada, 1997).

**(Im)possible Boundaries**

To let go  
 of attachment  
 the experience may  
 lose the meaning  
 I have placed upon it,  
 with that loss of meaning,  
 I fear  
 I will lose  
 loved  
 aspects of myself  
 the possibility for freeing  
 voice  
 body  
 once silenced  
 during the moment  
 of the lived experience.  
 Clinging  
 desperately  
 to a single facet  
 momentary Truth  
 I miss  
 opportunities unable  
 to move beyond the barriers  
 of a single story  
 unable  
 to develop  
 relationship with  
 Other  
 instead I remain silent  
 alone  
 I speak  
 my words schizophrenic  
 holding  
 momentary meaning for me  
 unintelligible alone  
 to anyone  
 who  
 I do not let in.  
 Possessed  
 my boundaries tight allowing  
 few  
 rays of the fluid story  
 to enter  
 sealing the porous spaces  
 of being  
 turning freezing movement  
 through what  
 I have known  
 Caught  
 in my attachment  
 there is no room  
 to connect  
 grow  
 I am  
 forever trapped in the waters of silent  
 narcissism.

### **Subjective Admission**

My desire to hold tight to the stories I claim as my own is wrapped deeply within the chasms of my own subjectivity, yet *satya* and *aparigraha* allow me to release these stories so that they may become something else. As a postmodern artist, researcher, and teacher I want to open up spaces so that the fluid of multiple and un/known truths might enter into and through the collective movement of *be(com)ing* with and trying to make sense of the experiences of teaching and learning (researching). Yet, I admit there are moments when I find myself desperately attached to a singular meaning of the experience seeking to claim “It” as it was for me within a given moment.

*Satya* and *aparigraha* offer researcher and educator, s/he who is always in the process of *be(com)ing*, the possibility of moving beyond those cultural myths (Britzman, 1991) of a static known that may shape one’s perception of what is or what should be. Within this yogic space of possibility we are able to let go of absolutes and begin to be present to all that is going on around us.

### **Artful (Un)knowing**

Arts-informed research practices offer a powerful platform through which to become present; however, it is important to also take into account our humanity and desire as researchers and the hegemonic implications that exist as a result of this. The work one does within arts-informed research is deeply autobiographical and personal. As we tell our stories we become vulnerable, both to the possibilities of rejection by another as well as the loss of the story we once claimed as our own. We too, must examine the purpose behind our choices to do this sort of research. Leggo (2008) considers the autobiographical nature of research to be a form of *echolocation* as one seeks to locate oneself and experience in relationship to others. With this, I believe it is safe to assume that we are also seeking some form of identification within community. There is an eagerness to be seen, to *change minds* (Barone, 2008); however, one must be careful to avoid the imposition of a Truth, just so that s/he might make the desired point or provide the sought after image of self in relationship to the world. Within the paradigms of qualitative research exist many spaces to report knowledge or explain experience (Irwin, 2008), and all of these spaces have something to offer. Yet, there is also value in creating spaces to construct and co-create knowledge that is lively and fluid, always in a state of becoming (Irwin, 2008). Barone, encourages the researcher to embrace an epistemology that is *humble* (p. 38), that leaves space for others to relate to the story so that they might enter into the sought after living dialogue of meaning making. However, in order to create these spaces, we must look very carefully at our epistemological practices as researchers.

### **Yogic (Re)searching as Pedagogy**

In much of his work on critical consciousness, Freire (2005) remarks on the importance of entering reality, to engage dialogue for change. As an artist, educator and researcher, I believe it is extremely important to engage critically with the present moment; however, it also important to recognize the variations and temporality of reality.



We might engage, but it is important too, to be open to new ways of seeing the world. Through the practice of yoga, we are reminded to return to the breath, to re-connect with ourself(f)ves as well as earth and other. Both satya and aparigraha arise from the breath; with the breath we become one with the moment, one with all that is around us and we are able to release the possession of what we believe to be Truth. There is value in this work of non/possession as we consider the pedagogical possibilities of the living and performative collective story as it might begin to weave across the textual terrain of shared experience, inviting one to let go or at least recognize preconceived notions of what is known. It is through satya and aparigraha that experience becomes embodied: moving presently with/in the story allows one to release the tight grip upon those “loved” aspects of the experience and the self.

This does not mean, that we no longer value past experience, instead like Davies (2000) notes discussing the methodology of *collective biography*, “. . . listening to others tell their stories helps us fill in the gaps and silences of knowing oneself as an embodied being” (p. 14). By letting go we begin to live presently, sharing our knowing openly, allowing it, through dialogue, to move within and without ourselves fusing with the knowing of others -- responding across space and time.

### **Walking In/decision**

I remember  
 chilly autumns of transition  
 when bodies grew out of their comfortable shapes  
 becoming unrecognizable  
 grotesque  
 smiles veiling the boils  
 of growing up  
 too fast, too soon  
 Souls burnt to a crisp, peeling  
 revealing fresh, what we did not know  
 or want to believe  
 Children seeking  
 reeking of impending adulthood  
 the musk of parents burdens  
 and the cacophony of too many truths  
 We hid amidst our boisterousness  
 or timidity  
 Through the crowd  
 they look, judge, assess  
 leaves turning in whispering winds  
 of schooled expectation  
 We did the work  
 some of us  
 wanting more  
 reading through the tears of text  
 desperate for some reveal  
 a mirrored recognition of our experience  
 Spectred imagination weaving her willowy palms  
 through our words  
 until we could see ourselves  
 faint images rippling through the waters of our own anticipation  
 We did not want  
 to wait  
 or do what we were told

but sometimes we did  
 and sometimes  
 in the breeze of another beckoning  
 we began to wonder  
 and hope  
 finding beauty in the colors  
 of our becoming.

### Opening Research Spaces With Poststructuralist Intention

The words in this poem reflect my own experience(s) of coming of age as an adolescent. I return to these words and images, considering them first from the perspective of my/self, one who has and does experience a known. I remember the faces, the emotions, the places; however, I am aware that this remembering is shaped and evolving across space and time – if I were honest with myself, I would recognize that this is not my story alone. Instead, the story belongs to many – despite the fact that the images we see, the place, the sounds, they all might be different. As a researcher and writer of the self story I have two choices: I can claim the experience as my own, a static truth to be received or I can open my work up so that readers can weave their own stories within the spaces, coming to new meanings that extend far beyond what I may have imagined. Pedagogical spaces are created when I admit that my work arises from my own attachment to those experiences of struggle or delight that have shaped my understanding of myself(es). However, the pedagogical possibilities become much greater when I use the practices of *satya* and *aparigraha* to acknowledge and release this attachment to that which I perceive as my own personal Truth. To embrace these yogic practices within our researching means we must enter into the process with a poststructuralist intention, acknowledging how both ourselves and our words have been positioned across space and time; they are not our own. It is likely through the release of attachment, that I may become lost; however loss is not something to be mourned, rather through loss I might discover and create *open spaces* (Norman, 2001).

There are moments I find myself fearful, searching for a map, hiding myself for risk of exposure. My experimentation of *satya* and *aparigraha* within the textual landscape releases the need for protective isolation, inviting both myself and those who participate along the textual journey of (un)knowing, to perform varied possibilities of understanding what it means to be(come), to have been, and to grow, and to get lost. Davies (2000) intimates, “As one story unfolds, as the words are found with which to reveal the embodied memory, other memories unfurl from their original hiding places, bringing it to life in the same gesture as bringing other stories to life” (p. 14).

I do  
     remember  
 a thought in the darkness  
 child waiting  
     for the answers  
 of tomorrow or yesterday  
     move across her consciousness

Through the work of satya and aparigraha within teaching and research, our stories become energized and aware, open to the possibility of belonging to another or becoming something else. I ask -- how might you disrupt the poems those that reflect my past as well as those that render my own experience of making sense of research within this space, making them your own within this moment? But even as I ask this question, I wonder would it truly be disruption or have I, through yoga created an opportunity for (re)unification of self and other?

### **Embodied Ac/Knowledgements of Possibility**

#### **Uncomfortable researching postures.**

By embracing the postures of satya and aparigraha, by entering into a dialogue of experience and possibility, we might invite ourselves and others to move beyond the isolation of Truth, moving toward an awareness of the unsaid along the search for position within a complex world. The embrace engages a collective strength so that one might find comfort in the dis/comfort of (un)knowing, claiming agency with/in the ambiguity, moving in hope across the context of evolving experiences of be(com)ing with/in research. As our bodies and minds move through those spaces of the (un)known, created through satya and aparigraha we will not arrive at answers. Instead, our postures will begin to flow into a place of pedagogical possibility which arises when one begins to breathe through attachment, acknowledging within our truths the spaces of the silent and temporal ordinary, becoming attentive to our movements with/in and outside epistemology, thus beginning to embrace the act of living inquiry. The exploration is one of wakeful reflection; by weaving spaces for the un/known upon the textual landscape, I seek to create openings (Springgay, Irwin, & Wilson, 2005) where multiple voices may begin to shift or disrupt meaning, thus opening the windows of dialogue.

#### **Seeing Through the Door**

A young woman sat  
 tears heavy  
 hidden behind red doors  
 she knew  
 too many secrets  
 words listed upon a page  
 searching  
 for someone to see  
 burden heavy  
 collapsing the lungs  
 imagined being  
 There was a teacher  
 who asked her to share  
 listening  
 to her words  
 a requirement some said  
 but in the demand something became  
 a voice heard

her teacher  
 she saw something  
 the young woman  
 in the pain of her words  
 possibility, purpose, and beauty  
 and gave the young woman  
 hope in her sight.

### Negotiated Perception

I live in a moment, trying to make sense of it through text. Perhaps you may wonder about the exact experience that influenced the creation of the poem; however through *satya* and *aparigraha* I share only the fragment of a moment and then I offer it up, to become the story of someone else. Knowing, as that which might be transferable or quantified, cannot exist in such a space; instead I find myself thinking about the meaning for myself in this moment and what it might mean for someone else both with/in and across another moment. I have honored the practice of *satya* and *aparigraha* and with this willingness to release, and be present to the dis/comfort of (un)knowing, I, we, they, become transformed.

I begin to write, to negotiate my place within questioning, I move across a (s)p(l)ace similar to Lather's (2003) notion of research striving to be that which vacillates "between knowing and not knowing" (p. 265). It is in this vacillation...

amongst and  
 between the complexities  
     of life's entwinement with/in the moving circles of experience  
 that I find my/self seeking purpose and (awareness of) position. It is as I make  
 myself present  
     breathing  
         as I/we move in  
 and toward  
     the tangles  
         of moments,  
     that I/we might find  
 peace (Ellsberg, 2001, p. 19)

...rooting and dis/connecting myself within those moments in which my understanding may become more than simply knowledge, becoming something that transcends Truth moving toward a collective and breathing life. Research becomes something spiritual, embodied and whole by also existing beyond what I might ever claim to know. Moving with awareness, I seek to bow to those possible ways of being and knowing that intersect at the prism of creation – allowing for transformation, justice, beauty, and movement through the spaces of a life lived. But how is it that I might journey along this spiritual terrain of understanding? I speak of terrain rather than destination as I perceive the spiritual nature of research as pedagogy from the poststructuralist position discussed by Butler (1993) – that which shifts...

across contexts  
as the subjectivity  
of my/self as researcher

existing and

...interacting with the powerful echoes of all those moments of my past, present, and desires for the future. The spirituality of being and understanding is one recognized by Irigaray (2002) as evolving and incomplete; I am teacher, researcher, artist, writer, student – one moving in and out of the other, balanced and askew - seeking my/self with/in those traumas that have been inscribed upon my body (Davies, 2000; Slatterly, 2000) and continue to impact my perceptions and practices. With/in my seeking I “... must try to connect the here and now of today, this present moment of our life, to the reality of yesterday and tomorrow” (Irigaray, 2002, p. 21). It is in the space of this paper that I wish to explore the possibilities, those practices of multiple and *blurred genre* (Barone, 2008; Richardson, 2000) that are never fixed - but rather react to the shifts of...

nature and soul  
soul and nature  
nature  
soul  
shifting

...that might allow my understanding to reach a conscious place of fluid enlightenment. A fluidity of spirituality and insight that allows me, the researcher to establish connection and relationship with/in time and (s)p(l)ace, with an other. It is my intention to both invite and enter into dialogue with the reader as we explore what it means to be in the world through our movements and words. Some might note this awareness of self within research to be narcissistic; however, this is not my attempt, rather through satya and aparigraha—I can only speak of myself in the moment, I cannot hold or claim the thoughts of an other. By not claiming I can listen, opening myself up to the possibilities of be(com)ing with, of, and for an other.

### **Rendered Possibilities of Communal Truth**

The purpose of this paper is to provide a *rendering* (Irwin, 2004) of the epistemological possibilities that may exist when those involved in post-experimental, arts-informed inquiry draw on yogic philosophies to inform their researching (and teaching) practice. This is my self-story of “... living in the borderlands” (Irwin, 2004, p. 30), trying to make sense of the epistemology of experience as a means to inform my practice as a researcher, artist, and teacher. My intention is not to provide answers, but rather to create *openings* (Wilson, 2004) space for co-creation of a momentary knowing within ambiguity. It is the simplicity offered through satya and aparigraha that allows one to becoming whole entering into the openings of communal knowing as s/he makes oneself present to the temporal beauty of a shared un/known. Sameshima (2007) reflects upon this as she remarks:

Wholeness is thus living inside and outside-living a subversive esthetic,  
moving with conviction, away from the safety of conformity and

standardization, and the fear that holds us there, to the unknown, to the new, and to open connective spaces where impossible becomes possible.  
(p. 33)

It is my hope that through *satya* and *aparigraha*, one might become present to the (in)scriptions upon one's subjectivity; be(com)ing an agent with/in practice, aware of the shifts and fluctuations that occur with/in knowing and ready to "play" with them offering up new and unowned spaces of subjective possibility.

Recognizing the often static nature of research writing, I move to create open spaces that are artful, as I keep in mind Young's (2002) reflection that:

Art objects interrupt the familiar, notional life or take-for-granted meaning of both epistemologies and ontologies by providing an encounter with the other. Interrupting the familiar through an engagement with a work of art involves an encounter with the *other* which in turn implies an encounter with the *self*. (p. 1)

Both interruption and engagement with an un/known allow us to consider meaning from multiple perspectives. I have placed my words upon the page as an offering of what I might know across this moment, but these words are not fixed. I use poetry as a means to invite interruption and engagement. As I have mentioned, from a positivist perspective, knowing is something established and permanent. Poetry confuses this permanence by offering up space for interpretation. There may be dis/comfort in the interpretation as one becomes unsteady trying to make sense or find the path as he/she engages with the un/known. This instability encourages a deeper awareness as one tries to find direction through the brambles of an artful and unclaimed text. As Eisner (2004) points out, "change the cadence in a line of poetry and you change the poem's meaning" (p. 7). Along the researching journey through an unclaimed text we are invited to interrupt and make sense for ourselves with/in the moment, opening space for multiple meanings.

I am an artist, researcher, and teacher who seeks to explore the questions Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) consider to be consistent across educational research paradigms and perspectives: "What does it mean to know about teaching: what can be known, how can it be known, who has the authority to know, and how knowledge can or should be used for theoretical or practice purposes" (p. 42). Taking into consideration Lather's (1986) suggestion that the role of the researcher must be "reconceptualized as that of a catalyst who works with local participants ..." (p. 73), I reflect upon the location as the text itself; the participants who are all those who chose to engage with the text. Luce-Kapler (1997) identifies research writing to be a reconstruction of the experience that creates opening through which the reader might enter and better make sense of the experience I want to build upon this idea, moving beyond the idea of the text being a reconstruction, but rather as a researching experience itself. The words I write are meant to exist as part of a communal be(com)ing, that which Irwin (2008) explores as a "continuous process inherent in the knowing-through-inquiry process" (p. 73). Within this paper, there is not finality to what I am trying to say or (per)form; rather I seek to create openings, where others might enter into and play with the text through the interpretive lens of their own experience. Through this lively interaction, one may begin

to consider how the yogic practice of satya and aparigraha might influence his/her own researching processes.

## Yogic Epistemology as Praxis

### The Action of Patience

Within both teaching and research meaning cannot be imposed, it exists in experience and evolves through relationship. One cannot determine what happens within either context, however, it is important as Kind (2008) reflects, "... to take an attitude of waiting and listening ... without knowing exactly what you are waiting and listening for; to not know and give attention to the not knowing and to wait for something to present itself" (p. 173). While Kind is referring more to the practice of teaching, this lively patience is also important within living inquiry, and I would like to suggest, it is an example of both satya and aparigraha in practice. For me, within my practice of research and teaching it is not about representing or claiming a known, for knowing is fluid, shifting the moment it is shared, the moment the experience has passed. I draw on aparigraha to help me let go of my want, my desire to be true in my knowing and satya to help me recognize that truth is universal and thus cannot be claimed or owned by one. However, I am aware that we live in a culture that places high regard on absolutes. This is dangerous researching work, but necessary if we are to move forward in praxis, challenging those structures that marginalize and control (Madison, 2007).

Here, I find a necessary moment to pause, to consider the meaning of praxis for myself as teacher, researcher, and artist. Through praxis, theory and research become intertwined as we are (re)taught how to make sense of and respond to experience as a result of experience. Praxis both informs and leads one to action; it is simultaneously reflection, critical analysis, evaluation, and interpretation (Pearse, 2004). "Praxis is a way of being in the world" (Pearse, p. 185) and this being is about relationship and inter/action. Lawrence-Lightfoot (2005) has remarked "the boundaries that we draw between scientific and artistic representations of reality not only produce distorted caricatures of each realm but also blind us to the similarities and resonances between them" (p. 13). These boundaries often lead to a fixed view of the world, where we find ourselves believing and seeing through the mythic transparency of normatized knowing. Butler (2004) asks, "Is there an ethical valence to unknowingness?" (p. 38). She asks this question as she considers the responsibility of telling, examining whether *being* could perhaps be enough. The practice of satya and aparigraha suggests that not only could this be enough, but it might guide us toward a deeper, more universal understanding that exists both with/in and outside ourselves. When we let go of past attachments, existing only as a subjects present in the temporal space of relationship, we attain a greater sense of awareness of past and present/self and other. My story told, through the boundaries of my own subjective representations, offers little space for praxis. However, through the practice of satya and aparigraha, it becomes possible to blur the boundaries between scientific and artistic representations, to refine our understanding of truths, so that we might hear the subtle vibrations of subjectivity and ideology that echo across the consciousness of knowing. As we open our senses, (un)knowing, the images of life

become fresh, undefinable and full of possibility through a re-arrangement and dialogue that never ends.

### **Temporal Contradictions of a Knowing Self**

The room is quiet  
a body re-awakening  
in the not yet known

Several years ago as a doctoral student at Pennsylvania State University, I had the opportunity to participate in a collective biography workshop with Bronwyn Davies. I was so excited, to write – to tell my story. I knew even before I arrived, what I would write about. Today, I do not remember the theme, but I remember the story: I was a little girl, (perhaps four or five years old) in the doorway of the sacristy of the church where my father was a priest. I stood there holding my mother’s hand as she spoke of the organist with all her nice clothes, remarking that she herself looked like she had just stepped out of a Salvation Army reject box. A spiral staircase stood behind us—and I had just awoken to indiscretions of my father and his betrayal of my mother. This is one of my first memories. I was desperate to write this story, to share my beginnings and losses. I spent much time piecing the words, painting the picture just so. And then Davies came and asked each one of us to share our story – I shared mine. She told me I had over-theorized. And I thought to myself, “how dare you, this is my story, my experience – this belongs to me, I know ...” I was attached and afraid to let go, to listen, to leave room for new possibilities for be(com)ing an (un)knowing person with/in the world.

As an artist, researcher, and educator, I often find myself confronted with the chaotic and awkward disruptions of (un)recognized Truths. Within my classroom, I call on pre-service teachers to question, to deconstruct that which they read and are told, by examining their experiences critically, identifying those ideals that are not theirs alone. Being very aware of my own losses as an educator, I seek to prevent my students from the plight of the *ordinary person* who Freire (2005) remarks, may easily find him/herself “crushed, diminished, converted into a spectator, maneuvered by myths which powerful sources have created” (p. 6). It is painful for my students, to discover that their *truest sel(f)es* are subjects, belonging to an other as much as self, that they are not in fact autonomous. As I speak, calling on them to question, I am the *knower*. I continue to talk, to share with them the “best” forms of practice - opening up I hope, new possibilities for praxis. Yet there are moments of awareness when I begin to question my attachments within this position.

I hear a voice  
and recognize  
it is (not) my own  
claiming

I realize in the questioning that I am indeed attached to certain truths, and it is important for me to breathe with awareness, as I use satya and aparigraha to help me willingly acknowledge those truths as temporal and not mine alone, thus becoming willing to let them go.



## (Un)knowing as Truth

To further explore the notion of yogic (un)knowing within research and pedagogy, I would like first to reflect upon those ideas of the known that have so often shaped our perceptions and practices within the process. The perspective I take reflects a belief that education and research exist collectively, informing one another as they intertwine across contexts to make available multiple epistemologies, through sense and work, with which to engage with the world. It is from this perspective that I draw on Dewey's (1997) considerations of *experience and education* considering the institutional nature of acquiring knowledge as it categorizes and orders knowing. This categorization of knowing is also addressed by Bacon (1983) as he considers Castaneda's definition of knowledge as that which exists categorically or in species. Knowledge is separate, ordered and rationale—the idea is that the acquisition of knowledge within education, and as such research, offers one the opportunity of success as defined by those others who have come before. Education is as Dewey notes, part of a “traditional scheme” (p. 18) of imposition, where knowledge comes “from above and outside” (p.18). Elliot Eisner (2004) remarks: “We live at a time that puts a premium on measurement of outcomes, on the ability to predict them, and on the need to be absolutely clear about what we want to accomplish” (p. 3). There is a static quality with/in this idea of knowledge, and many find comfort in the tangible sense of completion it offers.

Do you know  
     what it is  
         I know  
 The measures  
     and outcomes valid  
 we have discovered  
 you  
     and I  
         separate     in our claiming  
         and knowing  
 (have I forgotten yesterday  
                     today  
                     this moment passing  
                     and what might be  
                     tomorrow

The fixed image of Truth, according to Toulmin (as cited in Eisner, 2004) is one that evolved during the Enlightenment, when the purpose of knowing shifted in emphasis from the *timely* toward the *timeless* (p. 3). From this perspective our epistemologies and truths may remain long after we are gone. It is from within this *enlightened* position of knowing, one that seeks to define and pave paths toward absolute truths and understanding, that much traditional research (and education) claims its space.

## The Energy of Temporal Enlightenment

But I must ask, what happens to the knowledge if it stays still, caught within the lifeless space of timelessness? Through this contemplation, I return again to yogic

philosophy and practice where body and mind are unified and present to the living moment through the breath. However, for the body to breathe and the mind to be aware we must engage in the practice of satya and aparigraha so that our *prana*, or lifeforce might be active. This prana is energy that must move to remain healthy and as Iyengar (2005) remarks,

Energy needs to flow, or its source withers. By covetousness or miserly clinging on, we stop energy from flowing, from creating more energy, and eventually, by this offence against a natural law, it is we who are impoverished and poisoned by our own hoarding of life's riches. (p. 254)

They tell me  
     Knowledge feeds  
         me  
 milk  
     to live  
         birthed  
 in motion  
     my steps        are made  
         taken          with awareness  
 but who  
     where  
         when  
 what is it  
     that drives me forward

Energy and enlightenment, can one exist without the other? Lather (1991) highlights that “The fundamental tensions between the Enlightenment and postmodernist projects provide a fertile instability in the most foundational tenets of how we regard the processes of knowledge production and legitimation” (p. 81). Consider for a moment research and knowing as a birthing process, what happens when the child comes into existence, taking his/her first breath. Fels (2004) reflects on performance and the complexity of being in relationship to education, posing that “if we imagine performance as generative action-interaction—a birthing and a rebirthing—of coming to know simultaneously within form and through the destruction of form, we find ourselves within the generative space located between structure and chaos” (p. 80). This chaos disrupts the picture. Reconsider for a moment the organic nature of a birthed knowing, many of us find beauty in a stated and claimed known, yet if we hold too tightly to the petals of this frail flower, the beauty (like the child) withers and we remain – staring at the space where it once existed. The shadows of our mourning, the standing and waiting for truth to return may hinder the growth of new flowers and temporary truths, texts remain claimed Truth, owned by one. It is the acknowledgement of the chaos, through the practice of satya and aparigraha that we develop an awareness of the fluidity and temporality of experienced Truth. This may lead us toward uncharted paths of collective (un)knowing as we bask in momentary existence and truth, ready to let go of attachment, thus moving forward.

## Recognizing Knowing as Ideologically Self-Centered

While I have considered the pedagogical possibilities that arise when through *satya* and *aparigraha*, we readily acknowledge and release our attachments to the known, I believe it is important to acknowledge that even with/in this work of releasing or (un)claiming truths, we may find ourselves becoming a part of, or developing new ideologies (Lather, 1991). Consider for a moment Nealon and Searls-Giroux's (2003) reflection of the blinders of ideology:

Ideology is that which allows us to say that our values are 'better', without any reflection on who 'we' might be and without the slightest shred of evidence to back up our claim about 'our' superiority. Ideology is the thing that entices you to forget that meaning has always happened in context. Ideology leads you to accept each day as a natural fact: Things are the way they are; cased closed. (pp. 89-90)

Fact represents the grasping of an attachment based in that which we have not stopped to become present to. For instance, I might say I do research – I have known the process of searching, I have tried to make and share meaning across multiple genres and texts; however, there are some who have told me that my work is not research, there are no numbers, no answers. All this is a matter of perspective, in a sense epistemological and certainly, in my opinion, pedagogical – I want to open up the conversation, inviting dialogue; at the same time, I admit part of me wants to silence this other who challenges what I believe to be true, something that I recognize as an important part of my identity.

There is a desire to claim our epistemologies, as those which are both absolute and truthful. As Irigaray (2004) considers, this truthful "knowing" exists through a single lens, one through which we see another as we see ourselves, "through our knowledge, our affection, our customs" (p. 24). There are limitations in these self-centered and ideologically focused ways of knowing – however it is from this frame that much research has been accepted and defined as such. And it is often from this position that that we find our movements trapped as we try to defend our own ways of knowing. While there still remains room for offering perspectives, it is easy to find oneself caught up in those "Grand Narratives" that Nealon and Searls-Giroux (2003) recognize to be those rationalizations that help us justify our practices and ways of knowing. Researching exists in context, (un)knowing exists in context – even in this moment, I am writing in context.

My body breathes  
     knowing  
         I claim to be you  
 to see you  
     exactly

I admit that part of my (un)knowing at this moment exists in my frustration and desire for the work I do to be recognized as something other than self-indulgent art or storytelling within the Academy. While I admit the contextualization of my knowing within this moment, my subjectivity continues breathing, existing as that which is constantly being



## Ending With/in Practice

Janesick (2000) identifies in her metaphorical exploration of research as choreography, the story searched is one of improvisation, evolving over the course of moments. In (re)searching, the selves of artist, teacher, and researcher collide in the discomfiting space of (un)knowing. Truth, that has for so long been recognized as that which holds pedagogic value within the telling space becomes fragmented, slipping in and out of the subjectivities of multiple voices. As these voices come together in a cacophony of storied selves, pedagogy evolves becoming something outside the hegemony of a starving society desperate for Truth. As I reach the textual conclusion of this research of (un)knowing as praxis, through the lens of satya and aparigraha, I remember the words of my teacher, Sudarman, “in yoga you experience, listen, take what you like and leave the rest.” And so in this breath, I release my words – a story, (un)knowing to be rewritten, recognizing that this is what it is/was, in this moment.

## References

- Bacon, J. (1983). Knowledge, more or less. *Nous*, 17(4), 663-668.
- Barone, T. (2008). How arts-based research can change minds. In M. Cahnmann-Taylor & M. Siegesmund (Eds.), *Arts-based research in education: Foundations for practice* (pp. 27-49). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Barthes, R. (1977). *Image, music, text*. New York, NY: Hill and Wang.
- Bernstein, R. J. (1976). *The restructuring of social and political theory*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania.
- Britzman, D. (1991). *Practice makes practice: A critical study of learning to teach*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Butler, J. (1993). *Bodies that matter: On the discursive limits of sex*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (2004). *Precarious life: The powers of mourning and violence*. London, UK: Verso.
- Cochran-Smith, M., & Lytle, S. L. (1993). *Inside/outside: Teacher research and knowledge*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Davies, B. (2000). *In scribing body/landscape relations*. New York, NY: Altmira Press.
- Denzin, N. (2003). *Performance ethnography: Critical pedagogy and the politics of culture*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (2000). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 1-28). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Dewey, J. (1997). *Education and experience*. New York, NY: Simon Schuster.
- Eisner, E. (1997). The promises and perils of alternative forms of data representation. *Educational Researcher*, 26(6), 4-10.
- Eisner, E. (2004). What can education learn from the arts about the practice of education? *International Journal of Education and the Arts*, 5(4). Retrieved September 1, 2008, from <http://www.ijea.org/v5n4/v5n4.pdf>
- Ellsberg, R. (Ed). (2001). *Thich Naht Hahn: Essential writings*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

- Fels, L. (2004). Complexity, teacher education, and the restless jury: Pedagogical moments of performance. *Complicity: International Journal of Complexity and Education*, 1(1). Retrieved August 29, 2008, from [http://www.complexityandeducation.ualberta.ca/complicity1/pdfs/complicity1lg\\_fels.pdf](http://www.complexityandeducation.ualberta.ca/complicity1/pdfs/complicity1lg_fels.pdf)
- Freire, P. (2005). *Education for critical consciousness*. New York, NY: Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Grumet, M. (1988). *Bitter milk*. Amherst, MA: The University of Massachusetts Press.
- Irigaray, L. (2002). *Between east and west: From singularity to community*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Irigaray, L. (2004) *Key writings*. New York, NY: Continuum.
- Irwin, R. L. (2004). A/r/tography: A metonymic metissage. In R. L. Irwin & A. de Cossen (Eds.), *A/r/tography: Rendering self through arts- based living inquiry* (pp. 27-38). Vancouver, BC: Pacific Educational Press.
- Irwin, R. (2008). Communities of a/r/tographic practice. In S. Springgay, R. L. Irwin, C. Leggo, & P. Gouzouasis (Eds.), *Being with a/r/tography* (pp. 71-80). Rotterdam, Netherlands: Sense Publishers.
- Iyengar, B. K. S. (1976). *Light on yoga*. New York, NY: Schocken Books.
- Iyengar, B. K. S. (2005). *Light on life*. New York, NY: Rodale Books.
- Janesick, V. (2000). The choreography of qualitative research design. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 379-399). London, UK: Sage.
- Kind, S. (2008). Learning to listen: Traces of loss, vulnerability, and susceptibility in art/teaching. In S. Springgay, R. L. Irwin, C. Leggo, & P. Gouzouasis (Eds.), *Being with a/r/tography* (pp. 167-178). Rotterdam, Netherlands: Sense Publishers.
- Lather, P. (1986). Issues of validity in openly ideological research: Between a rock and a soft place. *Interchange*, 17(4), 63-84.
- Lather, P. (1991). *Getting smart: Feminist research and pedagogy within the postmodern*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Lather, P. (2003). Applied Derrida: (Mis)reading the work of morning in educational research. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 35(3), 257-270.
- Lawrence-Lightfoot, S. (2005). Reflections on portraiture: A dialogue between art and science. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 11(3), 3-15.
- Leggo, C. (2008). Autobiography: Researching our lives and living our research. In S. Springgay, R. L. Irwin, C. Leggo, & P. Gouzouasis (Eds.), *Being with a/r/tography* (pp. 3-23). Rotterdam, Netherlands: Sense Publishers.
- Luce-Kapler, R. (1997). Reverberating the action research text. In T. Carson & D. Sumara (Eds.), *Action research as living practice* (pp. 187-197). New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Madison, D. S. (2007, May). *Dangerous ethnography and "utopian performative"*. Paper presented at the meeting of the Third International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry, Champaign-Urbana, IL.
- Nealon, J., & Searls-Giroux, S. (2003). *The theory toolbox*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Norman, R. (2001). *House of mirrors: Performing autobiograph(ically) in language/education*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.

- Pearse, H. (2004). Praxis in perspective. In R. L. Irwin & A. de Cossen (Eds.), *A/r/tography: Rendering self through arts-based living inquiry* (pp. 184- 197). Vancouver, BC: Pacific Education Press.
- Peters, M. A., & Burbules, N. (2004). *Poststructuralism and educational research*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Prabhupada, A. C. B. (1997). *Bhagavad-gita: As it is*. Victoria, BC: Bhaktivedanta Book Trust.
- Richardson, L. (2000). Writing: A method of inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 923-948). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Sameshima, P. (2007). *Seeing red: A pedagogy of parallax*. Youngstown, OH: Cambria Press.
- Slatterly, D. P. (2000). *The wounded body: Remembering the markings of the flesh*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Springgay, S. (2004). Body as fragment: Art-making, research, and teaching as boundary shift. In R. L. Irwin & A. de Cossen (Eds.), *A/r/tography: Rendering self through arts-based living inquiry* (pp. 60-74). Vancouver, BC: Pacific Education Press.
- Springgay, S., Irwin, R., & Wilson, S. (2005). A/r/tography as living inquiry through art and text. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 11(4), 897-912.
- Wilson, S. (2004). Fragments: Life writing in image and text. In R. L. Irwin & A. de Cossen (Eds.), *A/r/tography: Rendering self through arts-based living inquiry* (pp. 75-88). Vancouver, BC: Pacific Education Press.
- Young, K. (2002). Writing as possibility: Poetic practices and pedagogy [Electronic version]. *Canadian Journal of Language and Literacy*, 4(1).

### Author's Note

Sarah Mackenzie, Ph.D. is an Assistant Professor of Education at Bucknell University in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, where she mentors student teachers and teaches courses in literacy and educational foundations. Her current research explores arts-informed epistemologies and the ways and spaces in which pre-service teachers (co)write their identities as teachers. Correspondences regarding this article should be addressed to Sarah Mackenzie, 466 OLIN Science Department of Education, Bucknell University, Lewisburg, PA 17837; Telephone: (570)522-0382; E-mail: skm011@bucknell.edu, or sarah.mackenzie@bucknell.edu

Copyright 2010: Sarah K. MacKenzie and Nova Southeastern University

### Article Citation

MacKenzie, S. K. (2010). Disciplined (un)knowing: The pedagogical possibilities of yogic research as praxis. *The Qualitative Report*, 15(5), 1124-1144. Retrieved from <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR15-5/mackenzie.pdf>