

Editor's Introduction

Getting Off the Struggle Bus

One of the most important relationships that the oppressor/system of oppression wants to maintain is one with the oppressed via fear, control, and disproportionate distribution of power, resources, wealth, and opportunities. To do so, the oppressed must invest a significant part of their time, energy, and effort in maintaining their relationship with the oppressor. This relationship can be one of opposition to and disruption of the oppressor and the system of oppression. However, even having the oppressed invest so much of their time, intellectual, emotional, physical, and spiritual resources works out in favor of the oppressor. This is because investing a major part of our resources on the oppressor leaves us with limited resources for everything else in our lives. This means less energy and fewer resources are available to nurture more loving relationships with people, plants, animals, books, nature, and anything else of their choice that is affirmative and uplifting. If we were to invest more energies into relationships that nurture and uplift us, we would not be trapped in investing all our prime resources into the oppressor/oppressor binary relationship.

I am not arguing for bypassing the oppression or the struggle we experience as multiply-marginalized people. I am suggesting that we interrogate how we are investing our energies and the associated outcomes, such as draining us of our resources, creating distress, and battle fatigue causing challenges in our personal and professional relationships or physical, mental, or spiritual health. Indeed, we must continue to do the work of disrupting dominant and oppressive power systems and challenge the agents that perpetuate them. But by investing in relationships that nurture us and create healing and restorative possibilities, we can neutralize the battle fatigue and other harmful effects on our bodies, minds, and spirits. We can draw strength

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from the positive, affirming relationships to continue dismantling individual and networked systems of oppression.

Many years ago, I was walking a labyrinth at a contemplative practices retreat. I was alone when I was navigating the maze. I focused on a question and tried to walk to the center intuitively. I came to a dead end three times. Frustrated, upon arriving at the same dead end the fourth time, I decided to cheat and trace the pathway to the center of the maze from where I was to complete the task. To my surprise, I discovered that what I thought was the dead end was actually the center. That I could solve a complex puzzle easily, without any struggle, was beyond my imagination.

This was when I realized that many of us are programmed with the notion that we have to struggle to succeed. Success without struggle is to be questioned as unreal or impossible. But what if it is not impossible to achieve success without struggle? We have several examples of such occurrences among those who enjoy multiple privileges. We are not meant to live our lives in deficit and scarcity. Collectively, we need to believe that achieving success need not have challenges and barriers as prerequisite. We can invest our energies in creating abundant opportunities.

To that end, I invite you to imagine the most freedom-oriented scholarship you can produce and consider publishing in this journal as a manuscript or a special issue. That way, we create several landmark issues for healing, restoration, and departures from programmed discourses that are spirit- and resource-draining.

Each of the articles in this issue serves as a possibility model. The authors take on the vital task of expanding possibilities in their disciplines through critical interrogation, theoretical and methodological departures, and contemplating qualitative research in ways that are alchemized to their sensibilities. In doing so, the authors extend an invitation to all of us—how can we expand our disciplines to create multiple fertile terrains of possibilities instead of reifying prior discourses for status quo?

Laura Smithers made me smile when she used the utterance *fuck it* to open up a space to discuss profane methodologies. Smithers explores the creative potential of *fuck it* via existing methodologies as a performative move that can create an impasse and aesthetic and situates *fuck it* in three different theoretical exemplars with data drawn from an ongoing qualitative inquiry project. Smithers concludes, “So long as there are research practices that mind their manners, whatever their labels or provenance may be, *fuck it* will be profane. Orient to *fuck it*, catch its spark, and experiment.” I invite the readers to consider profane methodologies and their role in their inquiries.

Michaela Frischherz and Desirée D. Rowe utilize a critical focus group conversation about sexuality and sexual lives with women juxtaposed against normative sexual scripts, unsatisfying sexual experiences, and faked orgasms. They introduce a reparative reading method that has failure, ambivalence, and sexuality in dialogue with each other. The strength of this essay lies in highlighting reparative possibilities while discussing and living with ambivalent and ambient failure while exploring the interplay of power, pleasure, and agency.

Kurt Borchard reflects on the post-pandemic moment and questions the role of creative work in promoting narrative thinking, subversion, and open-ended discursive potential. Using Van Gogh's work, Bouchard delves into art's commodification, reproduction, and authenticity juxtaposed against a pandemic- and technology-infused era.

Tanetha Grosland takes on the difficult topic of focusing on the researcher's emotions in leadership and policy research as a construct that could "unite us in personhood." Grosland articulates how emotion is discursively disciplined, co-opted, and controlled in politics. Using critical theories as influencing frameworks, Grosland traces the complex ways emotions function in qualitative research and how leadership and policy literature can be expanded and interrogated by disrupting the stigmatized pairing of leadership and emotions.

Taking departures from tradition requires imagination, dreaming bigger than our current circumstances, and a willingness to tap into our creative thinking. If collectively, we invest energies in creating uplifting and life-affirming communities, then we would inevitably decrease our investment in our oppressor/oppressed binary relationship. We would know that we exist in other beneficial relationships from which we can generate and access possibilities and opportunities. Thus, I think it is time we reconfigure our relationship with riding the struggle bus. It isn't that we would be immune from struggles. But the time is now to get tickets for the possibility, opportunity, and abundance bus. And so it is. ■

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She is the 2022 winner of American Educational Research Association's (AERA) inaugural Guba award for Outstanding Contributions to Qualitative Research from the Qualitative Research Special Interest Group (SIG). She is the 2018 winner of AERA's Mid-Career Scholar of Color Award. Her co-authored text with Kent Gillen, *Power, Race, and Higher Education: A Cross-Cultural Parallel Narrative*, has won a 2017 Outstanding Publication Award from AERA (SIG 168) and a 2018 Outstanding Book Award from International Congress of Qualitative Research.