SJS-Who? Performance Ethnography and a Practice-Based Pedagogy

Oona Hatton

In the call for this special issue, our editors queried, "What is the performative force of practice-based research (PBR)?" This article expands on that important question, asking, What is the performative force of practice-based pedagogy? In other words, are there any common perceptible outcomes of students engaging in PBR in a learning environment? I offer as a case study the culminating project of my research methods course in performance ethnography. After describing the project's multi-step process and its alignment with both critical performance pedagogy and the performative paradigm (Haseman 2006), I propose three observable features of practice-based pedagogy: intimacy, accountability, and reciprocity. As evidence, I share selected excerpts from students' writing and my own anecdotal—that is, unpublished—knowledge (Hunter 2019) based on our classroom discussions and my observations. In addition, I offer the archival vestiges of the most recent class project in the form of our playscript. It is my hope that in addition to articulating PBR's contributions to critical performance pedagogy, this reflection can assist in affirming some of PBR's broader methodological contributions.

SJS-Who? Critical Performance Pedagogy and the Performative Paradigm

For several years, I have taught a course in performance ethnography in the Department of Communication Studies at San José State University, a large state college in California's Silicon Valley. In addition to being part of our performance studies curriculum, which also includes courses in performance theory, ensemble creation, race and performance, and adaptation, COMM 123I satisfies the requirement for a course in communication research methods, two of which are required for all majors. Although COMM 123I is an upper division course, that designation is misleading; most students arrive on the first day possessing conscious knowledge of neither ethnography nor performance-making. (I say conscious knowledge because, as we discuss in the early days of the class, all of us have engaged in some form of ethnography and/or performance-making, and some of us are continuously engaged in it.) Over the course of fifteen weeks, students are introduced to formalized fieldwork techniques by learning to write field notes, engaging in participant observation, and conducting interviews. They also practise performing, translating their observations and experiences into solo performances, collaborating on group presentations with found text, and envisioning elaborate immersive experiences based on their chosen field sites.

The culminating project is a group performance created using a process I have developed drawing on the work of Anna Deveare Smith (2012) and Everyday Life Performance (Stucky 2002; Hopper 1993). In *SJS-Who?* (a pun playing on the university's acronym SJSU), students share verbatim performances of individual community members based on transcripts of interviews they have conducted using a shared set of questions. Over the years, *SJS-Who* has explored a diverse array of themes, including student loan debt, working for the university, and the experience of student veterans. Most recently, in spring 2022, the class voted overwhelmingly to investigate the impact of

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hate crimes on the campus community. The student scholartists interviewed friends, professors, and administrators about their understanding of what constituted a hate crime, their familiarity with campus resources and/or interventions, and their personal experiences (see Appendix).[1] They then reviewed the audio recording in order to select two to three minutes of material to perform. Some chose a single passage, while others decided to "stitch" several short sections together. After transcribing their selection in minute detail, noting the pacing, emphasis, volume, pronunciation, and verbal stumbles, students memorized the passages, working to replicate the original delivery as closely as possible (Stucky 1993).

Although the vast majority of performances are in monologue form, one or two student scholartists may opt to set their transcript to original music or to choreograph a dance to accompany their prerecorded rendition of the text. After the students perform their pieces for the class, they meet with their interviewees to perform for them, in order to receive feedback on their portrayals. While these meetings are taking place, I enter the process as curator/dramaturg, assembling the roughly twenty-five solo pieces into a single script. The play is structured as a series of acts, each containing four to six monologues on a shared theme. Based on the content of the passages they have selected, some students will have their original monologue divided across two or three acts; many perform in one act only. For the group performance, which is held in our classroom, performers wear a common costume, such as a white top and black bottom, with an emblematic prop or costume piece to represent their interlocutor. Transition music plays between acts, but otherwise there are few production elements beyond a semicircle of chairs. Because the single performance is held on a morning during finals week, we tend to have a small but dedicated audience, including everyone from supportive roommates to peers scrambling to earn last-minute extra credit, to the dean of our College of Social Sciences.

Just as COMM 123I can be classified as both a research methods course and a class in performance studies, my pedagogical approach is transdisciplinary. I teach performance ethnography from a critical pedagogical standpoint, meaning that while I am interested in having students explore systemic imbalances of power, I am also interested in how power inflects the classroom dynamic (Giroux 2021). I also employ a practice-based pedagogy (Hatton 2021) that draws on the tenets of a "justifiable" practice-as-research (PAR) process, as outlined by Robin Nelson (2013, 48). In many ways, performance ethnography serves as a welcome bridge between these two related but distinct approaches. In concert with framing the process by which students collect, interpret, and disseminate their findings through the performance of *SJS-Who?,* this pedagogy also aligns with Brad Haseman's formulation of the performative paradigm, a methodology that liberates PBR from the constraints of a qualitative approach (2006). In the most recent iteration, it was students' investment in the topic of hate crimes, rather than the identification of a specific research problem or question, that set the research in motion. Their interest, fuelled by a combination of fear, grief, outrage, and curiosity, also reflected the performative paradigm's acknowledgement that the researcher and their subject are unavoidably "entangled" (Østern et al. 2021, 7). This entanglement throughout the interview, editing, and performance process, accentuated by the embodiment of interview subjects, ensures that the research is "intrinsically experiential" (Haseman 2006, 99). Moreover, the presentation of findings through live re-presentation reflects the performative paradigm's insistence that research be shared in the form most suited to its practice (Haseman 2006, 100). As Tone Østern et al. maintain, any attempt to translate what has been learned into another mode risks diminishing its impact, in terms of both knowledge production and the potential for eliciting an emotional response (2021, 2).

Every performance of *SJS-Who?* constitutes the production of new knowledge on (at least) two levels. Student scholartists learn (and teach others) about the chosen topic; they also learn through practice one approach to conducting PBR. Below I propose three features that characterize the PBR-learning process, one corresponding to each of the three players in Soyini Madison's (2012) explication of performance ethnography: the performers, the subjects, and the audience. I suggest that these features are connected primarily with the practice of research and not the object of study, but the two cannot be wholly differentiated. In other words, the topic of the performance will invariably shape the ways these three features manifest in any given semester.

Intimacy

The first outcome regards the relationship between the student scholartist and the material/data/evidence/stories they perform—what we refer to in our class as "knowledge." This term risks glossing over the troubling power dynamics that have historically accompanied ethnographic research. Ethnographers have long grappled with the reckoning that conducting inquiries about specific cultures is not a neutral practice (Clifford 1983; Fine 1993; González-López 2013). Despite moving beyond the colonizing perception of the ethnographer as the expert who understands the Other better than they understand themselves, ethnography remains an approach dogged by accusations of misrepresentation, extraction, and other abuses. Performance ethnographers, equally susceptible to ethical missteps and exploitation, have sought ways to mitigate these harms, including Dwight Conquergood's conception of the dialogic performance (1985), Tami Spry's "performative-I" (2006), and Soyini Madison's performance of possibilities (2012). As these practice-led scholars emphasize, embodied representation does not imply ownership or even possession of knowledge; rather, it simultaneously invokes without fully re-presencing the interview subject while conveying the performer's own connection to their words. As Conquergood writes, "The stories my Laotian friends tell make claims on me" (1985, 3).

I also use the word *knowledge* to encourage students to reconsider, in the parlance of our department's more typical research methods coursework, what is to be considered evidence. In our understanding of performance as a site for acquiring, interpreting, and sharing knowledge, performance studies scholars are epistemologically expansive. We commit to excavating new sites of knowledge and knowledge production, unearthing "subjugated" information (Foucault 1980, 82) and attempting to understand it by taking it into our bodies (Jones 2002; Smith 2012). Framing the stories of their interviewees as knowledge asks students to consider who is granted the title of "expert," as well as what form expertise is allowed to take. Similar inquiries arise as we question appropriate methods for the storage and dissemination of research. We discuss why embodiment might be perceived as a "nonserious" means of interpreting and sharing findings (Conquergood 2002, 146), and how that might shape perceptions about the impact and rigour of their own work.

I characterize the student scholartist's embodied relationship to knowledge as *intimate* to convey a depth of understanding, while also delineating the boundaries of relation. Here intimacy should be thought of as akin to but not analogous to intimate theatre, a form described as intense, immediate, and often one-on-one (Gardner 2009; Wilson 2020). In contrast, I define intimacy as a deep level of (subjective) connection and/or understanding that is also characterized by distance; as student scholartist R.R. articulates, the researchers "aim to meet with the ideas of the subject" (2017) but do not subsume them. This formulation hearkens back to Madison's description of the dialogic performative as "a mutual creation of something different and something more from the meeting of

bodies in their contexts" (2006, 320). S.D. (2017) likewise writes about finding a balance between the intimacy of embodiment and the independence of both the interviewee and the ideas, beliefs, and experiences they share: "The performer has the ability and responsibility to metaphorically take residence in the world of the individual they're assigned to perform. . . . If unsuccessful, the performer could become arrogant, thinking that s/he is the sole provider of a culture's voice rather than showing how that culture has been expressing itself prior to the performance."

The performative paradigm embraces entanglement at the same time that it distinguishes between the subject and the researcher. The idea that the subject exists before and will continue to exist after the research is presented also connects to intimacy's relation to time. The process through which student scholartists engage with the material takes place over several months as they conduct interviews, decide on the portions they wish to share, bring the selected knowledge into their bodies through memorization and rehearsal, and share the knowledge with others through vocalization, movement, and physical copresence. Diverging from Gardner's association of intimacy (or the suggestion of intimacy) with brief but intense interaction, intimacy may be achieved through the quality of engagement (i.e., embodiment), but also through repetition and duration.

That the researcher transforms the knowledge through their mediation even as they are transformed by it is another tenet of the performative paradigm (Østern et al. 2021). Findings can "help the performers grow in their field of view," argues A.F. (2022). Although the impacts of performance ethnography are often discussed in terms of the audience or the subject, the outcome of intimacy reminds us that, at least in a learning environment, practitioners of PBR are changed by research and by the research process.

Accountability

The second outcome treats the relationship between the interview subject and the student scholartist. As with intimacy, *accountability* is not a feature inherent to PBR pedagogy, but it is fundamental to anyone interested in an ethical practice. The students of COMM 123I are introduced to the idea of accountability in performance ethnography through Joni L. Jones's (2002) description of her immersive installation about Yoruba life. Jones urges ethnographers to think of their performances as collaborations with members of the community they are portraying. While Jones also suggests that there is indirect accountability when members of the source community are present in the audience, the focus of the class is on researchers' responsibility toward their interview subject.

In the early iterations of COMM 123I, I did not require students to perform for their interviewees because I feared the additional time commitment would dissuade potential participants. I soon realized that the ethical grounding provided by this step was too important to omit. When I added the feedback session to the PBR process in 2016, the powerful—and negative—student response immediately confirmed its significance. Despite reading Conquergood (1995), Madison (2012), and Jones (2002), and participating in multiple class discussions about the ethics of representation, cultural appropriation, and exploitation, students meet this assignment with strenuous resistance. While they concede that the risk of offending or embarrassing their interviewee (or themselves) is outweighed by the importance of asking for feedback, most remain apprehensive until they meet with their subject. In reflecting on the feedback sessions, many express that the experience is both affirming and productive:

> Although I was confident with knowing the monologue for proper delivery, I still had an apprehensive feeling locked behind my confidence. I had no idea how she was going to react being that this was a touchy subject. [. . .] [A]s I started I just let go of myself completely and delivered it how I remember her doing it for me. When I was finally done, she said "Wow, I have chills. I completely forgot I said that. Yea you sold it!" After hearing that I felt 100% confident in my delivery because having her validate it made me feel like I was remaining ethical and true to her words. (T.G. 2019)

> I will be taking the feedback I have received from them to make adjustments to the final performance so that I can portray them in the most authentic way possible. (A.K. 2022)

> We had a long discussion about why I chose the portion of the interview I chose. She had shown a little discomfort . . . and I asked her if there was a way that I could portray the message to make her feel more comfortable . . . she just suggested for me to emphasize the emotion just like how I did in my performance, just to emphasize the vulnerability in sharing a sentiment like that. (J.J. 2022)

Students also acknowledge that performing for their subject changes the quality of the performance: "As soon as I took on the character, I got self-conscious. . . . There was something about knowing you are acting someone out and they are watching you that just makes you start thinking and makes you change the performance a little" (S.G. 2017).

Through a scaffolded accountability exercise, student scholartists become familiar with one of the most important ethical dimensions of PBR. Like intimacy, accountability orients them toward the *process* of performance ethnography, emphasizing the relational experience between the researcher and their subject over the final performance.

Reciprocity

The third feature can be observed in the interactions between student scholartists and community members who attend our public performance. Scholars in theatre spectatorship have long maintained that audiences are (or can be) "at least as productive as the complex sign system comprising the onstage action (Bennett 2012, 8). In her discussion of the dialogic performative, Madison describes "a generative and embodied reciprocity between the subject and the performer" (2006, 321). Based on my observation of multiple *SJS-Who?* performances, I suggest that an equally productive exchange can take place between the performer and the audience. These acts of *reciprocity* take place in the moments after the performance when audience members share their own stories with the students. In my experience, audience comments tend to fall into three overlapping categories: many are expressions of praise and congratulations; others are inquiries about the research and rehearsal process. Finally, there are those who wish to convey their experience as spectators. In the third case, accounts of watching the show almost invariably lead to the spontaneous narration of how the topic has impacted them personally. For instance, after our play about student loans, student spectators vented about the psychological burden of anticipating paying back sizable loans, as well as the pressure of being forced to choose between going into debt and gratifying their parents' dreams for them to receive a college education. When we performed interviews with student veterans, an administrator from the Veterans Resource Center opened up

about his own reluctance to disclose his military background when he had returned to school decades earlier. During the post-show discussion for our most recent performance about hate crimes, SJSU's middle-aged, Asian American chief diversity officer was brought to tears as she told the performers about her decision to quit jogging for fear of being attacked while running alone.

Although I would characterize these moments as "emotionally voluminous," I am not asserting *SJS-Who?* or PBR's potential to achieve the heights of Jill Dolan's utopian performative (2005, 5). Rather, I aspire to Madison's "performance of possibilities," moments that lead to "creation and change" (2012, 191). Nikki Yeboah (2020) has suggested that the performance of possibilities can be mapped onto the bodies in motion in the wake of a performance; in this case, the performers cluster together on the stage, some in physical contact with each other, all of their eyes trained on the single speaker. They lean in, nod eagerly, sigh. I am interested in how the spontaneous sharing of stories constitutes a remarkable continuation of the performance, in which the student scholartists become the audience. As the assembled individuals enact a reciprocal exchange of attention, facilitated by body-to-body copresence (Madison 2006, 323), they trade roles, and the inquiry continues. As Haseman proposes, although the planned performance might be the "principal" site of research, "the material outcomes of practice [are] all-important representations of research findings in their own right" (2006, 7). Perhaps more than either of the other two outcomes, reciprocity signals the potential for a PBR pedagogy to destabilize the centres of authority and attention.

Conclusion

I have proposed that PBR conducted through performance ethnography in a learning environment is characterized by three key features: intimacy, accountability, and reciprocity. These phenomena, which are all relational in nature, do not manifest consistently, even in a case where the instructor and the curriculum remain constant. There are too many variations among individual student scholartists, across topics, and in the historical moment in which the research is pursued. Nonetheless, there is enough of a pattern that it is useful to make this tacit consonance explicit (Nelson 2013, 48).

In an editorial commentary titled "The Politics of Possibility," Yvonne S. Lincoln and Norman Denzin gesture toward the impact that educational practice might have on the outside world. Invoking Madison's account of a student performance, they assert: "This form of critical, collaborative, performance pedagogy privileges the primacy of experience, the concept of voice, and the importance of turning evaluation sites into democratic public spheres. Thus does critical performance pedagogy inform ethnographic practice" (2003, 440). If performance pedagogy can inform ethnography, it would be equally productive to consider how a practice-based pedagogy could be helpful to those conducting (or studying) PBR outside of the classroom. Can these three features be identified in the work of professional PBR practitioners? If not, should they be?

Coda

As an appendix, I include the script of the most recent *SJS-Who?,* in part to demonstrate its inadequacy to capture the experience. As Haseman writes, the text "will not accommodate completely the surplus of emotional and cognitive operations and outputs thrown up by the practitioner" (2006, 7). It cannot convey the anxiety, tenderness, and excitement that radiates from the student scholartists on the day of the show, nor the care with which they recount their findings.

Nonetheless, it may be helpful in providing a more concrete visualization of the event and its dimensions.

Acknowledgement

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Appendix

SJS-Who? Hate Crimes Playscript
COMM 123I, Spring 2022

SCRIPT NOTES

As a compilation of excerpts from twenty-five unique transcripts, this document includes many instances of nonstandard spelling, capitalization, and punctuation. Although all students used a common annotation system (see below), they also indicated emphasis, tone, and pronunciation in unique ways, which accounts for many of the idiosyncrasies.

.	indicates micropause
(2)	indicates 2 second pause
<	increase in volume
>	decrease in volume
Italics	emphasis
CAPS	volume
hh	exhale
.hh	inhale
=	smile

PROLOGUE

SFX: *Intro Music*

(Enter PAOLA, MEGHAN, AMANDA, JACOB, GIO, ALISON, strike tableau of "denial.")

(TEA, MARISSA, BRIANNA, JAKE, SIERRA, MICHAEL line up behind audience.)

TEA: This sounds like a fascinating topic. Regretfully, I will not be able to participate.

MARISSA: I don't know . . . I'm not sure . . . if this would count?

BRIANNA: I'm not a lawyer. I'm not a police officer

JAKE: I have never been a victim of a hate crime so I don't know how my perspective would be relevant.

SIERRA: You know this is just me this is my own opinion but

MICHAEL: I don't know if it would be my place to discuss it. I just don't want anyone to think I am overstepping any boundaries or anything.

SFX: *Music*

(Exit all except BRIANNA, MARISSA, JACOB, and GIO)

(ENTER RANDY, TONI, XANDRO, BRIANNA, MARISSA)

SCENE ONE

JACOB: How would you define a hate crime?

BRIANNA: [the] definition of a hate crime is you're targeting someone because of their identity, right (?) Right.

RANDY: Sooooo . . . the way I would describe it is . . . an action (*bites her lip*), an action done to a group of people, a certain group of people or individual that belongs to a certain group, like some sort and it is done. with bad intentions. It's targeted and it is (*looks around*) the base of it, is (*speeds up*) prejudice towards those people and that is, the base of it, it is not like, it's just not a random thing, like the person is targeted for, it could be for their sexuality, their race, their ethnicity, the way that they look (*pauses*), that is a hate crime.

MARISSA: I would explain hate crime asss *(3)* a crime that. someone *(2)* who has whooo has racial intentions like bad racial intentions. specifically targets someone because of their race.

BRIANNA: Now once it's within the same group, (2) now, (3) it does get tricky. (=) That's, that's GRAY. (h) That's the gray. But I wanna make it very clear we all have biases, (2) we all have privilege, (2) and so it is very easy. it's easy for. We've seen people within the same groups TARGET each other or MISTREAT each other or have favoritism because someone is a little lighter than or a little darker than. (h)

TONI: You could also argue that, you know, any kind of gender-based violence has a hate crime component. Right. Think about sexual violence and things like that. So I would say a lot of people, you know, people who identify as women experience hate crimes and it's called sexual assault. It's often not called a hate crime because our society isn't really awake yet to how much patriarchy impacts so many young people in that way. We talk about feminism, people immediately turn towards equal pay and they forget about the just rampant amount of sexual violence that happens. You know, we don't want to talk about that.

XANDRO: It's something you're being persecuted for, something you can't control.

GIO: I think a lot of people think that a hate crime can just fall into the category of things like, like gender or, or maybe even, you know, religions or, or things that you can physically see about someone. I think also hate crimes can fall into the category of

hating an idea right. Of, of, of a thing or a person or of an entity of what they believe in or who they are. Right. And so, you know hate crimes, come in various forms. But, you know, I think like kind of the, the basic foundation of a hate crime, right. Is, is having this hatred and doing something to a person because of something they believe in or something that, you know, is who a part of who they are.

SFX: *Music*

(Exit all but MARISSA, who moves to stool. Enter GABRIEL with guitar)

SCENE TWO

GABRIEL: *(sings)* I'd say a hate crime is illegal malicious intent
Based off of someone's character and unchangeable character

The first thing I think of when I think about it,
If I consider myself. as part. as part of a group. subjected to. hate crimes
I consider myself a Christian, that means I follow Jesus
The example that he set, per the New Testament
And something that he said is that the world is gonna hate us
Because we follow Jesus

And in terms of San José State I feel like
Since we're very diverse that kind of
There's two student outcomes of that
I think there's people who embrace the diversity
And I think there's some people who inbred deeper segregation
And maybe, implicitly, to some sort of degree

Further hate crimes illegal malicious intent
Based off of someone's character and unchangeable character

I think the really great thing about using the word hate crime (is it)
Validates the victim, helps identify a problem
It's not just this concept or weird thing that happened to you or
Someone you know or love that you're just confused about
It helps you identify the problem so you can identify the solution

But I don't think it's a problem of politics
Oh I think it's a problem of the heart

(Exit GABRIEL. Enter JACOB, MAHASTI, MEGHAN, JAKE)

SCENE THREE

MARISSA: Have you or someone you know experienced a hate crime?

JACOB: Wheeen I weeent to <Missouri and New Jersey> because I'm in the army <specifically Missouri Fort Leonard Wood> (h) I remember there was definitely <outward racism towards me and preferential treatment with my peers> who had a lighter complexion = you know what I mean= same thing with New Jersey (2) it's the same deal over there. When comparing those places to SJSU and San José in general it's. <it's pretty much, it's much much safer when comparing> thankfully in San José uh it's more diverse = feel like people are more inclusive especially SJSU they do a good job with that.

MAHASTI: One of our professors who came to me who is an African American professor (2) and they assumed that he is a Muslim. (h) He came to me and he told me that (hhh) in the bathroom (2) somebody wrote a message for him (2) very large print (2) in the men's bathroom. He was threatened with that message. And I called the police station and they came and they cleaned that area (2) And a day later, it was the same message in the women's bathroom. Sooo I was afraid (2) andddd I thought ok, whoever wrote this message. . . knew Muslim peop- Muslim women are in charge (2) in the office because it was writing about Muslim women in this department (h) we are not gonna be safe either. . . Sooo at the time, I was the only Muslim woman in administration (hhh) So we called again they came they cleared. Of course nothing happened, but it was scary.

JAKE: Like growing up before, like I never really gave it much thought, like, especially like, um, Asian-American hate crimes, like, I mean, I've known about police brutality, especially with like. African Americans and stuff, but like with just because people that don't really talk about it, like. for Asians until like recently, I never really knew, but I found out, I think it was like three semesters ago? Like I took an Asian American history class. and I learned about the case of. Vincent Chin. Like, like it's not a happy subject, but if you're ever looked looked into it. it's a pretty good documentary. Like it taught me a lot of like. how like Asian hate's been going on for a long time.

MEGHAN: So my brother was in this car with this group of friends and ended up getting pulled over under the assumption that theyyyy like stole the car that they were driving? And so they were immediately like drawn at gunpoint and asked to like get on the ground on the street and put their hands up and yeah (2) Soooo I don't know if that would technically be like a hate crime but like (2) it was just really strange to think thaaaat. . . Yeah so. . . (2) Yeah I mean that ended up happening and then when they found out the car was legally registered under that person's name they were very like oh well, (h) like sorry (2). But I think it really taught my brother (2) about those optics and how things can come across to other people.

(TEA turns overhead lights off, JEREMI turns on blue light, MEGHAN turns on lamp behind couch. AUSTIN begins walking from SR around behind the audience.)

AUSTIN: We were walking towards Santa Clara street and he was walking towards um further into campus. Um (1) my friend and I were just having a conversation when I noticed the guy looked at us from that distance (1) faced us (1) and then he starts walking across the grass towards us = So on high alert (1) I (1) you know (1) I kind of let my

friend know like, "Hey, I think that person is heading straight towards us." He had to cross like two sets of grass. Um (1) and um (1) within that span of like two seconds . I had told her = I think he was coming . he was and **(BOOM!)**, right at our side. And theeeeen we immediately turned around and walked. started walking back towards campus. You know (2) it's well lit where the dorms are and everything. And during that time he was like, "Hey, what's going on? Like, what's up with you ladies. What's going on? What's happening?" And um. I don't encounter this situation a lot at all. but my friend Jada does. So, um, it seems like her initial style was just ignore him. Like *be* silent, *keep* walking, *don't look at him*. (h) We were passing like the art building. It felt like the longest walk ever. Uh . and he just said, "what's going on? Like, Hey mamacita," and he started speaking Spanish (2) very poor Spanish. Like it wasn't even good. So the reason why I bring this hate crime, or I think of this in regards to hate crime is because it seemed very ethnically targeted. He started speaking Spanish, calling my friend "mamacita" because she was uh yeah she is um. a Latin American. Latinx. And I remember at some point we just stopped and we. we said like, "Hey you," or I said, "can you give us space? Like stop? Why are you following us?" And anyways. um yeah = he would say really gross things like, "oh, you want me to like slap you on the butt or slap," you know. like all these really gross things. And then we had finally reached towards campus. I don't really think I need to include this detail. buuuuut other than me saying like, "HEY, GIVE US SPACE. WE DON'T WANT TO TALK TO YOU." She also said, "DO YOU WANT TO GET SPRAYED?" (2) Like she also looked at him and he just unfazed. It was crazy that we'd say these things, but he'd still keep following us. Um but yeah, once we got back to campus, I think he knew that we were gonna be safe. So he threw like his most um, like disturbing things. (2). He was like, (h) "I'm gonna come back and find you and I'm gonna rape you." (3). That's what he said. Yeaaaaaaah. And then he turned off and started walking away.

SFX: Music

(JEREMI turns off blue light. ALL exit but MEGHAN and AUSTIN, MEGHAN cross to AUSTIN, lay hand on shoulder, then cross SR to stool. AUSTIN exit SL.)

(Enter JEREMI, STEVEN, MICHAEL w newspaper, BRANDON, JANINE roll in table from SL to CS, sit on top in front of MICHAEL. MICHAEL keeps newspaper up for whole scene.)

SCENE FOUR

(TEA turns lights on.)

MEGHAN: What do you think are the impacts of experiencing a hate crime?

BRANDON: I mean, it probably varies. quite a bit like (2) depending on the severity of the crime and like, you know. what crime it was, it could just be like a general fear of going out and like encountering people. You knoooow, when whatever comes with that, like (2), the physical, emotional psychological damage that's done. Uhh also. DEATH you know, in the worst case. And then you know, there's really hospitalized, sometimes they DIE. And then other times they have to rely on like GoFundMe is

because the healthcare system of America totally ASS. So ugh they have to, yeah, the financial damages that they have to pay for because of like, medical bills or replacing their shit or whatnot. because they can't exactly really take this to court a lot of times, because a lot of times like, like the guys left, like it's hard to find them.

STEVEN: You have to question why? Right? And it's hard to deal with just the simple fact, like why do people not accept me for who I am? Right. Why is it that I look a certain way where people think it's okay to enact violence on me or a certain racial group that causes like a whole ton of stress? You know and I can't even imagine really what one would go through just juggling the idea the entire time. Right. There's something that happens that just probably causes one to go to some certain breaking point, right?

JANINE: Yeah, I mean, you know. . . I touched on this earlier but. . . it's that feeling where you want to be safe but you don't? Not that you don't want to *(laughs)* don't get me wrong I want to feel safe and I felt safe in SJ when I was there, but (2) with things arising now, I don't and (2) you know (2) um (2) there's a lot of people that feel the same waaay where (*speeds up)* you just wanna go outside and you wanna feel comfortable being who you are, but (2) you don't. So, what are you supposed to feel? You feel (2) I wish I wasn't who I am because who I am is being targeted right now. Um. I never felt that way in SJ but I know that if I still went there I would. Because you just don't know. Um. *(takes off glasses to wipe tears and collect herself*) For me, I always feel like oh. (2) I wish I wasn't Asian so I could just go outside but (3) I am Asian, and I wanted to feel proud of that but now something that I want to be a part of I feel like I don't want to be anymore. *(voice breaking and shakily)* It's because I don't want to experience what other people have experienced (2) and that can really mess someone up emotionally and mentally in a really negative manner.

(TEA: Lights off)

JEREMI: San José State in a lot of ways is SO much saferr than a place like Arizona State (hh). And in fact, (h) one of the reasons why. you know, towards the end, I was so hell bent on leaving. And you know, *(voice slightly quivers)* excuse me if I get a little emotional (2) that spring 2016, the first two weeks, four students died (*Voice breaks*). (2) Three were suicides, and one was a murder. > And the student that was murdered. she was, it was an off campus murder? But she was an international student. (h) She was not my direct student, but she fit the profile of someone who would take my class . And all I kept thinking about was. this young woman's parents get a call in the middle of the nighT (*chokes up)* with the news that their daughter is murdered (*crying*) (3) that was really what drove meee to leave Arizona State. I remember the night that Trump won (2) And you could hear the cheering you could hear like, YEAH, you know, like, and I think that was the first time when I thought, OOOh (2) my God, like, I think I knew. that. there was going to be, you know, like violence was going to be haaad > for anyone who wasn't whiTe (2) wewere walking to my caaar, and there's a truck that's slowly following us. And like (2) the. you know, like, FEarr comes over me. And we're both scarrred to death. But like, we move over so that the truck can like pass us, and the truck does, and then it stops in front of us. And. innn that split second, the first thing I thought was. my husband's gonna get a call tonighT. And he's gonna get a call that announces my DEathh,

because this is, this is it. Right? The truck stops. And it's a bunch of like young white men that > get out of the car. (hh) And they get out of the car, just to yell and scream. in joyyy that Trump won. I thought, this is just the beginning (h) of. the. type of. FEar that she, my friend, and I, you know, I'm Filipino. She's Korean. I was like, this is the very beginning. of what we're going to have to experience for the next four years (hhh). And so it was (2) just very scary. *AAnd* if you are someone who doesn't have to think about > safety, I want you to reflect on > thhhat.

SFX: Music

(MEGHAN strike chairs 1 and 2, STEVEN strike chairs 3 and 4, exit JANINE, BRANDON and JEREMI strike couch and lamp)

SFX: Michael's music

MICHAEL: *(Dance performed to transcript/music.)*
Hate crime is umm. . . ugh. . . is that, they kind of attack based on who this person is—nothing to do with what this person do. Uh, solely based on identity. Solely based on. . . you know, whatever the color of the sk-, uhhh, or you know, in my case and I- the reason surging of the Asian American uh hate crime is Asian American. Just solely because who we are. This face uh makes us the target. [Do I know anyone that has been affected by hate crimes?] You know, I actually don't personally know anybody but because uh ah I- you know, it's just, it's hard not to care. Umm. . . it's umm. . . it's not possible not to read the news and uh. . . and you see faces like mine, and you know, faces like my uncle, and faces of my aunt, you know. All these people are bloodily attacked, even killed and umm. . . They are my people. I- I feel like I know them. I feel like. . . I feel like they are just closest as you can get. And I have my sister living in New York City. Um… I worry about her every single day. I don't know how too. . . I mean if I ask her I feel like I put too much pressure on her being making her even more scared, but if I don't ask her, I am scared. I didn't- I don't know asking her doesn't make me feel better, but in not asking her I don't know what can I- what I can do so it's like, "how are you doing?". "OK another news, please be careful." I don't know what else to say. [What would I say to the perpetrators of hate crimes?] There must be something you learned that umm. . . that bias you. Uh, there must be something you learned that you feel so strongly about that you want to do that to us. Um. . . And I wish there is a way to make you understand that we are both human and. . . and I wish there is a way. . . um. . . you know, as a country, as a people, we can share our stories to. . . so that you hear more. Not only that story you hear, not only what you believe. And I don't know how many of you are out there. And I. . . I just want to invite you to. . . to. . . to see us eye-to-eyes. We're human too.

SFX: Music

SCENE FIVE

(Exit MICHAEL, with table. JAKE restore Chair 1, ALISON and ADRIANA restore Chairs 2, 3, 4. ARIANNA and AMANDA restore couch. TEA turn lights on. PAOLA and TEA enter.)

JAKE: Does the university do enough to prevent and respond to hate crimes?

ADRIANA: I. don't know if things have changed. But I can speak from, when I attended the university and there WAS a hate crime, that occurred in the dorms, and a student waas locked up in his. suite, and haddd, Confederate flags hanging everywhere and posted outside win, on their windows for other students to see as they would walk by, the dorm buildings. Aaand, it was, completely kept hush hush, forrr months and months and months, that this was going on and the fact that it was kept under wraps pissed A LOT of people off because of course the victim was African American, in a dorm with 5 to 6 white (2) people, who, used their white supremacy to make this student feel HORRIBLE. Not a way anybody should ever feel. But the school'sss way of handling the situation is to keep it under wraps. And I think if it was *different*, if it was a *white student* who was kept that way (*speeds up)* all hell would have been broken loose.

ARIANNA: I was, actually talking to my boss um. the program coordinator the other day. I was kinda talking to her about uhm (h) this interview and she was telling me about how Centro it was actuall:yyyy - the reason that it finally was uh (2) founded was because of a hate crime directed towards Latinos (2) So I feel like that hate crime was a wake up call to the school. uhm (2) that it was uhm (h) eye opening to me that it took a hate crime for the school to realize. to do something about it (hhh)

AMANDA: Definitely there's just like policies we have to like, uh, like make those like stronger cause like they have policies where a lot of people don't really follow them or care for them. So definitely like (3) strengthen their policies, especially around students and faculty. And I noticed that like, like the president or like higher up people of our school don't really care for many inzzidents that happen here. Like they'll just like, ohhhh, like > *we'll give you money later*. Like. especially like when you see like the sexual assault that happened here. How they really threw it like under and they didn't care for it. Yeah. And so we definitely like need to focus on like the higher ups to make them know how like our troubles and our issues that are happening and then needing to do something more about it.

ALISON: We're in a weird place this year because there's been a lot of administrative changes like the former president leaving, people in different roles moving around, having a new title IX coordinator, the whole investigation in athletics and being sued, umm. It just, further. it further reveals the issues that SJSU's hiding. Theyyy are definitely in a place of power? So they should be responding to like hate crimes, like they shouldn't sweep it underneath the rug, that it happened, and also they have to find ways to support the person that experienced that, in terms of like resources and what's available to 'em, because. it's just like. it's like if a person goes through something like that, they should have support, like, it's not a question, it's like a justice issue.

TEA: I actually did read the story about [Gregory Johnson's] family- oof! That's, yeah. very, very difficult situation for the family. Cause I would be in the same. shoes, same boat: what happened. What- the report that you guys have given? It doesn't add up, it *doesn't* add up. So yeah, that was that was disturbing. For- and I don't want to say the school brushed it? under the rug? But. I don't feel like *they* took. The

appropriate steps. I don't think they did a full full investigation. I don't know if they're trying to hide something, cover it up, whatever, but they could have done more. They could have done more [. . .] And they're not getting the support from the school that they need. They don't realize just that one little piece of information will help them, you know? And they probably like got rid of some, you know certain *evidence*, information that they just don't want out there. I mean, they messed up all the way, it like the whole thing was done was all the wasn't done they didn't take the proper steps to do the investigation correctly, so I yeah yeah. It's unfortunate, but they're probably not going to find out. ever. They're just going to wonder and wonder and wonder and wonder and that's going to eat at them. But I don't know. whatever happened, I kind of like pull myself back cuz I can't let myself get too emotionally attached to these type of stories.

PAOLA: We talk about racial viiooiolence. It's an important way of thinking about this. Right. And this is what I'm saying, is that . . . the reeaeason that. The (2) police have engaged in. intergenerational racial violence against people of color is because they've understood it as their right to do that. Right? And sometimes their responsibility to do that. That's the way they've understood it. And white folks, um we talk about the Ahmaud Arbery murder right. White folks feel like they've been deputized. to engage in racial violence. as a means of. protecting their understanding of. what theeeiir responsibility is to other white people, and to white supremacy in this country (2) and it's a really complicated idea? but that's what's happening. Right. Sooo, we're engaged in these different forms of racial violence against communities of color on a daily basis. I mentioned earlier that this is educational as well. Right. And so. The way in which our schools engage black and brown students is a form of racial violence, I was just talking about the community cultural wealth model as this like. assets based, strengths based. approach. to working with Latino students. But we always use the opposite model, which is a deficit approach. Right. Which is racially violent. Against communities of color. The way in which Latino students are treated in schoooools. Is focusing on their deficits. Right. One example is language, Linguistically, we think about the need to help them learn English as quickly as possible. Right. Because we understand that their Spanish language is a deficit. and it's a problem. And until they. move past that (2) they're not going to be successful (2) That's a viiiooolent (2) educational approach to Latinx students, rather than seeing them as. students that have a whole other system of knowledge. of understanding of the world, of possibility. It hasn't been recognized or centered. The people-they- they just accept as the norm. And that's the problem. because when we talk about the- the racial violence of the- the murderers of ahm- Ahmaud Arbery. or of um. George Floyd or Brianna Taylor or of Orlando Castillo or of an- any of these um. you know many of these-Freddie Gray- you know, there's like d- d- dozens and dozens and dozens of names That is reinforced by all the work we do educationally in this country. Right. We educate. the. perpetrators of those crimes. to understand that racial violence is their right or responsibility. um to uphold their understandings, of white supremacy in this country.

SFX: Music

(Exit JAKE, AMANDA, ALISON, TEA, PAOLA)

(Enter AUSTIN, SIERRA, GIO, JENNY with stepstool, XANDRO with plant.)

SCENE SIX

AUSTIN: As members of the SJSU community, what can we do about hate crimes?

ARIANNA: Honestly I feel like their bare minimum is just being aware, you know? Because I know that it happens all around us (hhh) but sometimes we are just not aware of the things that are happening, happening around us = just because it is not directly happening towards us *doesn't mean we shouldn't be educated about it*.

SIERRA: Ummm, addressing it is easy. Well it is easier than preventing it. Addressing it is about finding out who's responsible, investigating to their best abilities if a crime has been committed, and then prosecuting to the full extent of the law. *(Confidently.)* I think that once the faculty and the police department do that, a few times you know because the penalties for for for hate crimes. it's a felony and its huge. and people do time for hate crimes, especially in California! I think a few of those if, if they prosecute to the fullest extent of The Law and then make it public you know put it out on the (2) campus website or make it known or post it on the Instagram, their blog, or whatever and allow people actually to HEAR about it I think that'll scare people into being more careful and thoughtful about doing it again.

ADRIANA: Hiring more professors. of people of color. to start. Because I know, especially in the criminal justice. department, almost all my professors probably except for one were white.

JENNY: We have to do as students, we have to do the like training for like sexual assaults and like (*gestures*) you know, all these trainings. (*sucks teeth*) But I don't think that by doing that once, you know, it creates an environment that's like 100% safe. It's something that you have to continue to do because it's not. it's not a conversation that we always have. If it's a conversation that we always have, like I think, for example, it doesn't. [it's] not really related, but you know, there's an increased conversation around pronouns. So sometimes you don't have to say like, you don't have to, umm, teach someone about pronouns, so you just have to create a space where we are using pronouns, right?

XANDRO: We need more story-based knowledge, like people who are actually sharing their stories and people who are from those minority groups telling their stories. I think that's the most important thing is just because I mean, right I mean, you're gonna learn fast. I feel like if you're interacting with someone's stories and you're able to put yourself in their shoes, and I think that's for me how I learned best and I feel like a lot of people could agree with that.

GIO: You know, the hardest thing is to listen these days, I feel like a lot of people don't have a listener, people, someone to listen to them. And so sometimes that can be the basic support as a, or they feel like they could actually be heard. Yeah. Um, because sometimes the people who are being hated on, like I said, they go into their mind. I mean, they think like, oh, I shouldn't say anything. Cause I don't wanna be retaliated

against, I don't wanna deal with this. I don't want to look like a fool. Right? And so they keep it bottled up. And so sometimes what it, all it takes is someone to just feel like they're heard and that makes them feel like they do have a say. For those people, just having that person to talk too, these resources, makes them feel like I am important! Someone does care about my feelings and what I have to say and how I feel is valid. And so I think that's what people want if anything, they want to keep their dignity for them getting that support is them keeping their dignity. It's keeping their sanity. It's keeping them valued as a member of society as a member of a college, as a member of a friend group, et cetera.

SFX: Music

SCENE SEVEN

ISEPH: (*sings*)
I think
definitely college campuses
I know,
since San José State, is so
adjacent to our downtown, area,
and San José of course is going through a period
right now where we have lots of folks who unfortunately have to live on the streets.

sometimes that gives a certain,
image that the campus
is somehow unsafe
or something like that
But the fact of the matter is that our campus – like many all over the country are the safest
"bubbles", if you will

that you're gonna experience
and that's for any number of reasons, not all because police or something like that, but that is in fact
the case,

(*ALL begin to enter and fill in spaces on stage.)*

But I think that you have what I think is a really good point, of the conversation one of the things that we know battles this division and this kind of terror – is to actually build community, that's why it's not always about policing

I don't know, the–the university responses to these sorts of
things; it's about what's being done in that community
to build solidarity there among people across difference

(As song goes, people move on to stage)

JACOB: We are students.

JEREMI: We are faculty.

ADRIANA: We are alumni.

BRIANNA: We are administrators.

TEA: We are staff.

JENNY: We are the San José State community.

ISEPH: Thank you for listening to our stories.

END OF PLAY

Note

1. The term *scholartist*, while uncommon, has been in circulation in the fields of education, theatre studies, performance studies, and the social sciences for some time, often in discussions of qualitative inquiry (Hatton 2021; Nielsen 2008; Prendergast and Leggo 2007). William W. Lewis and Niki Tulk (2016) attribute it to Dr. Joseph Shahadi, Mila Aponte-Gonzalez, Dr. Amma Gartey Tagoe-Kootin, and others in the NYU Performance Studies program in the mid-2000s; I speculate it is a term that emerged organically across multiple disciplines as arts-based inquiry gained traction; the "art" of the scholartist ranges from writing, both poetry and prose, to visual art to performance. I use the term here in the spirit of Prendergast and Leggo (2007), whose poetic explication includes the passage:

> researcher/artists
> bring their artistic sensibilities
> and experiences
> into the research process:
> a form of symbolic constructivism
> a qualitative research approach
> that uses nonroutine
> artlike portrayal
> to elicit (challengeandshift)
> existing sense-making
> frameworks. (1470)

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